**Monstrous May Prompts**

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# Monstrous May Prompts

by Dovesummer

Summary

I'm no stranger to starting a month of prompts late and trying to do them all anyway. These are prompts from the #MonstrousMayChallenge on Twitter.

Ch 1 and 31 are more experimental. The rest of the prompts are traditional in terms of structure.

Also FYI I quit tagging about halfway through because I realized I would have a million Will & Hannibal incarnations if I continued. (Sorry)

I rated this explicit but frankly only Ch 3 ended up being truly explicit. Some other chapters have implied sexual content, but I ended up doing a lot of world-building in these and so they never got particularly smutty. So if you're reading at work . . . skip Ch 3 and you're reasonably safe.

# What is a Monster?

*What is a monster?*

A monster offers you kindness, acceptance and friendship.

A monster forces you to look at the world – to look at yourself – differently. It is wrong to deny who you are; you are not wrong.

A monster offers you the companionship you stopped allowing yourself to want, the conversation no one else provides, the understanding others lack.

A monster manipulates you for his own amusement, planting thoughts, suggesting methods, utilizing different stimuli; all while indexing action and reaction until he knows you better than you know yourself. He watches you burn, spiraling into the darkness. He allows you to fall, to lose your footing and to fear – but at the bottom he is looking up, arms outstretched, waiting to catch you. If you reach the bottom, it will only be with him.

A monster pushes you out into the cold before offering comfort you didn't need before you met him. A monster watches. A monster waits.

*What is a monster?*

He is there again in the darkness. He put you in a cage, but he is the one who watches from behind bars. You shy away from the truth (you have never felt more free.)

Rage allows you to act on your desires. You are forming yourself, slotting yourself into his life, manipulating the boundaries. Where does the difference between actions you took in pursuit of a monster, actions you told yourself were in pursuit of a monster, and actions you took for yourself lie? He poses questions you prefer not to answer, instead allowing the thoughts to fall into the gap between you.

He sees you anyway.

A monster embraces you, a monster gives you affection and belonging and hope.

A monster is not genuinely hurt by your betrayal. A monster cannot be. A monster does not feel what you do.

A monster will leave you behind.

*What is a monster?*

A monster survives. A monster hunts. A monster thrives. A monster does not fear death or violence, but pursues his goals with single minded focus.

A monster cares not for the people in his path. A monster takes. A monster learns, a monster grows.

A monster knows.  A monster waits.  A monster is a master of patience and resolve.  A monster with a worthy quarry waits silently, only pouncing when the time is right.

He pushes you to the precipice again and again and again, pleading you to jump.  Each time you step back.  Step away.  He will not catch you; you will fall alone.  You are tired of falling.

But the ledge is its own lure and you cannot resist stepping up to it.  The feeling of air beneath you, of falling, the trust of the leap.  He is no longer waiting for you at the bottom, he is standing with you on the edge.

You fall.

*What is a monster?*

The salt in your wounds awakens you, a forced, unwanted consciousness.  You have been baptized in your sin.

A monster drags you to shore.  You are unmoving.

A monster screams, cries, apologizes.  Begs.  Relief comes when you open your eyes.  Resolve in the form of an embrace; arms strong around you, skin soft beneath you.  Eyes full of tears, body worn and broken and vulnerable.

In the end a monster is only a man.

# How to Talk to Your Monster

Chapter Summary

Will invites the wendigo on his porch in for a drink.

Will sat up at the soft rustling sound coming from outside the window. He'd only had one whiskey - yes, he was on his second, but that was hardly enough alcohol to be hearing things, was it?

He approached the window cautiously, pulling back the curtain to stare directly into a pair of pale yellows eyes.

"Dammit," Will muttered. Beside him Winston tilted his head in a question. "Wendigo's back," Will explained, sipping his whiskey. He let the curtain fall, hearing a *tap, tap, tap* on the window in response. Winston made a soft, considering sound - not exactly a growl, more of a hum - and Will smiled. He loved each member of his pack and was far more connected to them than to most people he knew, but Winston was so decidedly human in his reactions sometimes that Will often found himself having full fledged conversations with the dog.

Winston barked without fully opening his mouth, the sound coming out as more of a huff.

"I know, buddy," Will said. "I'm not sure why he keeps coming back either."

Winston stamped one foot and looked pointedly at the front door. Will raised his eyebrows.

"No way." He was not going out there.

Winston barked then, one short gruff noise, higher pitched that his normal alert but lower than the yipping sound he made when he wanted to play.

Will sighed, tilting the tumbler in his hand and looking at the amber liquid. He was certain this was only his second. Far too little alcohol to be taking the advice of a dog to open the door to a wendigo on the porch.

Winston was standing in front of the door, whining softly.

"Dammit," Will said again, quietly, more to himself than to Winston, who dropped his jaw and panted in the pantomime of a smile. "Yes, yes, you're getting what you want." He reached for the door, pulling it open harshly to reveal the monster on the other side. Will took in the inky blue-black skin, pale eyes that he'd seen through the window, and velvety antlers protruding from the animals skull. The wendigo smiled. It was a perfectly normal smile with regular human teeth - if very, very white against the dark skin.

“What do you want?” Will asked.

The wendigo tilted its head, reminding Will uncomfortably of Winston. “Now Will,” it said, voice low and melodious, “is that any way to great a guest?”

Will said nothing in response, staring instead. The wendigo spoke English. The wendigo knew his name. The wendigo’s voice sent a pleasant shiver down his spine.

The wendigo thought it was a guest? His guest?

The wendigo’s pale eyes met Will’s, unblinking. A pale pink, forked tongue appeared between black lips, wetting them. Will sipped his whiskey before stepping back from the doorway, allowing the wendigo to enter.

What the hell was he doing?

Nodding slightly the wendigo stepped inside but didn’t move beyond the threshold of the home, instead surveying the living room/bedroom from the entrance. Will glanced at his feet, warming slightly in embarrassment. He used to sleep upstairs but it was nice down here, by the fireplace and with his dogs.

Winston rubbed against the wendigo’s leg and the wendigo pet him absently. Will took it - him - in, as he took in the home. The wendigo was tall, solid and muscular. He was quite naked and quite . . . Will looked up quickly, biting his lower lip as if to bite off the end of the thought.

It was warm. The fire was too high. He should open a window. He needed to cool down. Maybe he could step outside for a moment.

He closed the door instead.

“Would you like a drink?” he asked, gesturing to the tumbler of whiskey in his hand. Did wendigos drink whiskey? Did they drink at all?

The wendigo nodded. “Much appreciated,” he said.

The wendigo remained in the doorway as Will moved to the kitchen to get a glass. Returning to the living room, he retrieved the bottle from his coffee table and poured two fingers for his guest.

“So - uh - you’ve been coming around a lot recently,” Will said, handing the wendigo the glass. “I keep seeing you - ” he trailed off, gesturing to the window.

“Yes,” the wendigo acknowledged, watching Will with those pale eyes. They were more expressive than Will had expected, full of curiosity and intelligence.

Will stared, uncertain how to continue. “Why?” he asked, finally.

The wendigo tilted its head again, regarding Will. It wasn’t exactly curiosity in its eyes, Will decided, though it was something akin to that if slightly more alien. Beside them Winston

made a low huffing noise and moved toward the fireplace. He stopped before settling down, staring at Will over his shoulder, a question apparent in his stance.

If Will hadn't known better he might have thought the dog rolled his eyes before circling his space and settling down with the rest of the pack.

"Can we sit?" the wendigo asked, gesturing to the couch.

Will's eyes widened. "Oh, sorry. Yes, please sit." He watched as the wendigo moved quickly across the space. It was surprisingly graceful; sleek, powerful muscle moving sensuously beneath the dark skin. It seated itself delicately on one edge of the couch, crossing its legs and relaxing into the cushions.

Will stared into his tumbler again. There was a naked wendigo sitting on the couch in his living room, drinking his whiskey. A wendigo his dog had encouraged him to invite in. He drained the glass.

He'd either had too much or not enough.

Deciding on 'not enough' he picked the bottle up and poured himself another two fingers, taking a long drink before seating himself at the opposite end of the couch. He perched on the edge of the cushions, eyeing the wendigo cautiously.

"I find you curious," the wendigo said. Will said nothing, raising an eyebrow and turning to face the . . . man? monster? The wendigo made a low rumbling sound that Will decided must be a laugh. "You asked me a question earlier. It is polite to respond, particularly when one is a guest."

"Oh." Will's voice was soft. He felt a surprising amount of pleasure at the admission, though he was certain that wasn't the rational response to having a wendigo appear repeatedly on your porch for the better part of a month, staring in your windows, and then confessing it finds you 'curious'.

No, the rational response was probably . . .

Well, whatever the rational response was it certainly wasn't to invite the wendigo in, serve it whiskey, and sit with it on the couch.

"You're very quiet," the wendigo observed. "Does what I said bother you?"

Will felt himself flush and he shook his head. "No. I guess - I just - I'm not sure how to do this," he confessed, flustered.

"What are we doing?" the wendigo asked. Will caught a hint of amusement in its eyes.

"Talking," Will said, exhaling loudly. "I don't know how to talk to . . ." He trailed off. The wendigo was watching him closely and he felt himself flushing at the scrutiny.

"A monster?" the wendigo asked, though he didn't appear offended.

“Anyone,” Will mumbled. “I’m bad at conversations. I’m sure you noticed I live with seven dogs.”

The wendigo smiled, showing off his too-white teeth. “We’ve done this out of order,” he said. “Let’s start with introductions. You may call me Hannibal.” Shifting the glass to his left hand he extended his right.

“You already know my name,” Will said. He should probably be bothered by that. He wasn’t.

Hannibal’s lips quirked. “Indulge me.”

“Will,” Will said, gripping the firm, dry hand tightly and giving it a quick shake.

“It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Will,” Hannibal said, sipping his drink daintily. “You have excellent whiskey.”

From across the room Winston huffed. Will looked over, expecting to see the dog dreaming, but instead he had his head resting on a paw and his eyes moved between Will and Hannibal, taking the two of them in.

“Smart dog,” Hannibal said before giving Winston a wink. Winston panted in response, almost as though he were smiling. It was oddly endearing; two creatures in his home sharing a secret and looking pleased as pie while doing it.

Will smiled, allowing himself to relax back into the cushions. He was sitting on his couch with a wendigo named Hannibal, drinking whiskey, and he was enjoying himself.

# The Vampire

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Shit."

Will looked up from his book, startled. They'd only been acquainted a few months, but it was long enough for him to realize the doctor wasn't one for casual vulgarity. If he was swearing, it must be something serious. Will watched as he rummaged through his case, lips pursed and eyes full of the intensity he had long admired in his companion. The doctor approached the tediousness of life with a singleminded intent to make it *interesting* that Will found himself attempting to emulate - though he had to concede it was difficult for life not to be *interesting,* given the doctor's profession and his recent indoctrination into the same.

"Hannibal?" he asked, voice quiet and tremulous. He was still growing accustomed to the familiarity and the name felt foreign and dangerous on his tongue. The doctor lifted his head quickly, focusing dark eyes on Will, the tip of a pink tongue wetting his lips before he spoke.

"I apologize for my frustration."

Will raised his book to hide his smile. To the rest of society the doctor was the pinnacle of poise and good manners and it was an uncommon pleasure to see him as he was now: disheveled from fitful sleep on the train, wearing the same rumpled clothing from the previous day, hair - typically carefully coiffed - falling gracelessly across his eyes and forehead. Swearing.

"It's quite alright," Will assured him, closing the book and setting it carefully on the seat next to him once he'd managed to compose himself. "What is it that you seek?"

The doctor sighed, settling himself back onto the bench directly across. "Nothing of importance," he said, attempting a casual air that he clearly did not feel.

Will watched him for a moment, enjoying the way the doctor bristled under his scrutiny. He leaned forward, propping his forearms on his knees. "When I agreed to join you in this venture, we agreed there would no longer be secrets between us."

The doctor's tongue appeared again. Will watched as it breached the line of the doctor's pursed lips, pulling the lower one back with it as it retreated back into his mouth. The doctor rarely portrayed any obvious nervousness, but consistent proximity had allowed Will insight into his smallest quirks.

"Is there no distinction between something I am willfully keeping from you and something I prefer not to discuss?"

Will reclined, lifting his book from the seat beside him once more. "Of course," he said, genially. "We need not discuss anything that makes you uncomfortable."

“Will,” the doctor began, frowning. Will watched him over the top of the novel, breathing in sharply through his nose. Just as his use of the doctor’s forename was new, the doctor’s use of his given name brought with it a certain thrill and Will felt himself heat under the intensity of the doctor’s gaze.

“Yes, *Hannibal?*” he prompted, his emphasis on the name garnering the barest hint of a smile from the other man.

“I’m unable to locate something dear to me,” the doctor explained. Will flattered himself that no other would catch the hint of sadness behind the words, delivered with the doctor’s trademark neutrality of tone and expression.

“The stake your sister gifted you?” Will asked, turning his page with affected nonchalance. The doctor needn’t know he’d attempted to read it at least thrice without comprehension. “I have it.”

“Do you, now?” The doctor stood then, moving to loom over Will, bracing his hands on the back of Will’s bench, his face darkening. Heat rose to Will’s face as he imagine the doctor threading strong fingers through his hair and gripping, yanking his head back roughly - oh, the pleasure that pain would bring!

He reminded himself the attraction was wholly inappropriate and most certainly not reciprocated. It was his own desire that caused him to imagine the doctor focusing on his lips as he wet them, his own foolish want that lead him to imagine the doctor tracking the movement of his Adam’s apple as he swallowed harshly.

“I should like to have that back, my dear Will,” the doctor growled, pressing closer.

Will inhaled deeply. “In my bag,” he said, pleased when his voice was stronger and less breathless than he’d feared. He coughed as the doctor moved, adjusting himself on the bench. “You dropped it after our last encounter and I knew you would not want to leave it behind.”

“Foolish of me,” the doctor commented, lifting Will’s bag and handing it to him. Of course, the doctor would never be so uncouth as to go through his undergarments to find that which he sought - at least, not in Will’s presence. Will fought a smile, relatively certain the doctor had investigated every aspect of his life prior to extending the invitation to join him as a hunting partner.

Will found the stake quickly, handing it to the doctor who placed it in his own case before seating himself - not on the bench opposite, as he had before, but next to Will.

“Thank you for retrieving it,” the doctor said. “It was foolish of me to leave it behind and wise of you to know what it means to me.” It was soft but genuine and Will was unable to hide his flush in response to the praise and proximity. He was glad for the book still held in front of his face, but to his surprise the doctor placed a hand over it and gently lowered it so that he could view Will full in the face.

“Will,” he said, voice lower and huskier than normal. Will met the doctor’s gaze, discomfort and desire thrumming through his veins in equal measure. As he was about to respond the train shuddered to a stop.

“Time to go,” Will said, unmoving. The doctor nodded, standing and lifting his case, glancing over his shoulder to ensure Will was doing the same. “We have an appointment with a vampire.”

The doctor smiled. “So we do.”

Chapter End Notes

This is one of those things I write and would like to make longer.

# Iconic Settings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stared at the long line of stairs at the corner of Prospect and 36th St. They were steep but otherwise unassuming. Had Alana not told him he would never have known they were The Stairs.

He suspected Alana wouldn't have known, either, except for her new friend Margot who was a self-proclaimed "horror queen". It was Margot's idea to come see the stairs at 1am on a Wednesday night - a night they all should have been studying, preparing for exams the following day and getting to sleep at a reasonable hour. Not a night they should have been doing apple pie shots (Will still wasn't sure how he'd been talked into that one) and venturing out into the town.

Alana smiled at him, soft and sweet, as Margot suggested they run the stairs to see who could take them without falling.

"I'm in," she said, still smiling at Will. He wanted to kiss her. He'd wanted to since they met - maybe, if he proved his bravery on a set of iconic stairs, that would happen tonight.

"Me too," he said, pleased when Alana's smile grew wider.

"I suppose I am as well," came a softly accented voice behind him - the other friend Alana had invited, a transfer student a few years ahead of them. Hannibal something or another. She'd met both him and Margot in one of her psychology seminars. Will pushed aside a sudden jolt of jealously for both Margot and Hannibal. Despite the fact that he and Alana had the same major, he only had one class with her and it was a required English class.

Still, he'd managed to maintain a friendship with her, and that was something, right?

"Three, two, one - go!" Margot cried out, starting up the steps before she'd finished counting down.

"No fair!" Alana laughed, stumbling after her. Will sighed. From behind him came a soft chuckle.

"Do you suppose we have any chance of catching them?"

"Unlikely," Will said, irritated. He turned to take in the man behind him. 'Man' was the only word for him. He was tall, broad and muscular, with high chiseled cheekbones and soft, dirty blond hair that fell gently over his forehead. He had already grown into himself; a far cry from gangly first years like Will, Alana and Margot.

Hannibal smiled and Will could see why Alana liked him. He scowled to keep himself from smiling in return.

“The longer we linger, the less likely it is,” Hannibal said, gesturing to the stairs. Will nodded and began taking the steps two at a time, Hannibal’s long legs easily keeping pace with him. In front of them Alana stumbled and Margot reached for her, the two of them laughing as Alana leaned into her and they took the last of the stairs together.

“Poor showing, boys!” Margot teased from the top of the stairs. Alana was still leaning against her, breathing noisily and laughing in her drunkenness.

“You didn’t really give them a chance,” Alana said, looking up at her friend. Margot turned her head to look at her with a fond smile.

“Didn’t I?” she said. “I think I’ve given them plenty of chances.”

She reached out to brush Alana’s hair behind her ear and Will stopped short. Alana was smiling and gazing into her friend’s eyes and -

Oh.

Will sighed as he realized he would definitely not be kissing Alana.

“You ok?” Hannibal asked, stopping to look at him. Will nodded, swallowing. Hannibal seemed to sense something, looking at Will just this side of too long before nodding in response and continuing up the stairs.

Margot pulled a flask out of her jacket, taking a swig. “Whiskey?” she offered, holding it out in the general direction of Will and Hannibal as Alana leaned into her, giggling.

“Will likes whiskey,” Alana said, crinkling her nose as Will accepted the flask and took a swig. It was good whiskey. Much better than anything he’d purchased with his fake ID.

Hannibal also accepted, taking a small sip. “Hillrock Rye?” he asked before taking a longer drink.

Margot raised an eyebrow. “Impressive.”

Will looked at Hannibal, raising his own eyebrow. Hannibal merely shrugged, smiling at Will in response.

“I have an excellent palate,” he said, as if that were an explanation.

Margot offered the flask to Alana, who took a sip and made a disgusted face, earning her a laugh and a kiss on the temple. Will looked away abruptly. Margot and Alana didn’t seem to notice, but he felt the heat of Hannibal’s eyes on him.

“Should we try again, boys?” Margot asked, starting down the stairs. “Maybe you’ll do better next time.”

Alana laughed, giving Will that same soft smile as she started down the steps after Margot. He couldn’t help but smile back, despite knowing it wouldn’t lead to anything more. He

often thought Alana was his only real friend. If he couldn't be with her, he could at least be happy for her.

Margot leapt down a few of the stairs, her tawny hair floating behind her. She stopped not he landing, turning to flash them all a teasing grin, green eyes full of mirth. Will really didn't want to like her.

"Don't fall," she cautioned, "you'll roll all the way to the bottom and be inhabited by a demon."

"I think it was the other way around," Will said, laughing in spite of himself. Alana was practically running down the steps to keep up with Margot. He walked more slowly, sadness tugging at him once more.

"Alana tells me you're a psychology student at well," Hannibal said, pulling him from his thoughts.

"Yeah," Will said, glancing briefly at the other man. He was taking his time, ambling down the steps and seemed to have no interest in keeping up with the girls. "You are too, I assume?"

"Pre-med," Hannibal clarified. "I'm hoping to go to Johns Hopkins next fall."

That's -" Will paused on the stairs, unsure how to respond. "Good for you. That's impressive."

Hannibal smiled. "We should always pursue our desires, yes?"

"Yes." Will responded automatically, although he second guessed the answer as soon as he said it. Hannibal's smile widened almost imperceptibly, something in his face changing. He looked more open and relaxed. Younger, somehow, as though he belonged with a group of first years. Will glanced down the stairs. Alana and Margot were standing at the bottom. Sometimes desires were unattainable. He looked back at Hannibal, who was still watching him closely. Something in the man's eyes made Will feel warm. He swallowed, throat clicking audibly.

"Take a picture, it'll last longer," Margot called up to them. Will flushed at the implication, looking down at his shoes and watching Hannibal out of the corner of his eye.

Hannibal, for his part, merely laughed. "If we're racing again, I hope you intend for us to begin on equal footing."

Will smiled, eyes still trained on his feet. Hannibal had a particular way of speaking. He kind of liked it.

"You'll never know unless you get down here," Margot said, laughing and wrapping an arm around Alana.

"I suppose we'd best hurry." Hannibal gestured toward their friends and began walking down the steps. Will watched as Margot whispered something in Alana's ear and she giggled

happily.

Just then a light clicked on in one of the windows, followed but the unmistakable sound of a window sliding open. “Hey,” called a voice, rough with sleep.

“Run!” Margot yelled, laughing and dragging Alana behind her as she took off. Caught up in the moment Will scurried down the stairs, missing one and nearly falling. He was saved by a strong arm gripping him at the shoulder and pulling him back upright.

“Careful,” Hannibal said, quietly. “You wouldn’t want to be inhabited by a demon.”

Will laughed softly. Hannibal removed his hand from Will’s shoulder, squeezing gently before he did. Behind them they heard a curse and the window sliding shut. Will looked down the street in the direction Alana and Margot had run. The street was empty. A gentle breeze brushed across he face as he watched for movement, but they were gone.

“I guess we’ve been ditched,” he said dryly. Hannibal was still beside him, and when Will turned to look he was gazing thoughtfully down the street. “Sorry,” Will said.

Hannibal gave him a quizzical look. “For what?”

“Alana invited you to join us to see some spooky stairs and, well. That didn’t even last thirty minutes. Although I guess you saw the stairs.” Will ran a hand through his hair self-consciously, watching as Hannibal tracked its movement.

“I’ve seen the stair before,” he said, shrugging minutely. “I came for the company.”

“And now the company has disappeared.”

“That’s not the company I came for.”

Will stuck his hands in his pockets and looked determinedly at his feet, feeling his skin heat. He cleared his throat, unsure what to say. “You hardly know me,” he mumbled eventually.

“I hope to change that,” Hannibal said softly, “if you’re amenable.”

“I don’t know - I’ve never -” Will bit his lip, uncertain what to say. Thankfully, Hannibal seemed to understand.

“I have no expectations, Will. Other than your company, that is.”

Will was silent but nodded, still staring at his feet.

“May I walk with you back to campus?”

“Ok,” Will said softly, still feeling shy. He looked up. Hannibal’s smile brought a pleasant warmth to his chest - a sensation he wanted to chase. He found himself smiling in return. “Company would be nice.”

Chapter End Notes

Those cross streets in Georgetown are the actual location of the stairs at the end of the Exorcist. They're pretty unassuming, to be honest. :)

# Feeding Time

Chapter Notes

> NSFW (this is where that explicit rating is earned). this chapter also involves blood generally/blood as lube. I would say it's mild overall, but I don't like to assume how others will feel.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will felt a shudder run through him - not fear, but anticipation. He felt the familiar heat coiling in his gut, desire thrumming in his blood, the pounding of his heart its own siren song to his Master.

Though Will saw him daily, they had a set feeding schedule.

Tonight, his Master would feed.

Will would gladly have given himself up nightly - surrendering to the painful intimacy of fangs piercing his skin and the ecstasy of the connection he felt as his Master drew Will's blood into his body - but Hannibal would not allow it. He was careful with Will, handling him delicately.

Many nights Will wished he wouldn't, dreaming of bruises and bite marks, fangs piercing his skin, pain and pleasure mingling and driving him to the edges of reason until he woke, sticky in a crumpled pile of sheets, a right fist around his hard flesh and Hannibal's name on his lips.

He was half hard standing at his Master's door, fidgeting as he waited for a response. He'd only just removed his finger from the bell but already his patience was thinning.

"Will," he heard as the door opened, the heat behind his name a gentle caress as he stepped through he doorway.

Hannibal leaned forward to smell him and Will allowed it, tilting his neck to expose the long line of pale flesh, feeling himself grow harder as Hannibal inhaled deeply.

"You smell exquisite," Hannibal said and Will's breath hitched in response. He ran his tongue across his bottom lip.

"I'm ready Master."

"So you are," Hannibal said, cupping his groin. Will moaned, straining his neck, exposing himself as much as possible. Hannibal was so close he heard the clicking sound as his

Master's fangs extended, felt the drip of vampire venom on his neck. Will rocked into his Master's hand.

"Please," he whined. "I've been waiting all week."

Hannibal stroked his length casually, without any real intent, feeling Will harden further beneath his hand.

"So beautifully needy for me," Hannibal said, pupils large, eyes glowing red with need. He gripped Will more firmly. Hannibal enjoyed Will's arousal, enjoyed bring him to the brink of completion and leaving him shuddering and without relief. Undoing the button on Will's slacks, he reached a hand into his pants. Will hard forgone underwear, allowing Hannibal a firm and immediate grip around his leaking cock.

A moan lodged in Will's throat as Hannibal began to stroke him in earnest. It was rough and dry, but with each swipe over the leaking tip Hannibal spread pre-cum down the shaft, easing the slide and making it more and more pleasurable. Will bucked into his hand and Hannibal squeezed tightly, almost painfully, before withdrawing his hand completely.

Will whined. "Master." His cock twitched. He'd been so close, but he knew Hannibal enjoyed making him wait. Maybe tonight Hannibal would suck him down, taking his cock into the heat of his mouth, back into the tight channel of his throat. Maybe tonight Hannibal would bite into his hardened flesh, something he'd done only once before - his fangs so exquisitely painful Will had come immediately. More often Hannibal would sink his teeth into the soft flesh of Will's inner thighs, drinking from the artery there. It was less obvious that the neck, though Will wasn't concerned about being obvious. He belonged to his Master; he didn't care who knew it.

He leaned back against the door, breathless and shaking, as Hannibal moved to cage him, tilting his head down and ghosting lips across Will's neck. He whimpered as he felt the drag of fangs across his skin, shivering in anticipation. Hannibal placed his teeth over the skin at the base of Will's throat, the press of them a promise. But instead of biting, his Master ran his tongue over the delicate skin and Will closed his eyes against tears. He wanted to cry, to beg in earnest, but he knew from experience neither action would get him what he wanted. Hannibal took what he wanted when he wanted it - he would do this in his own time.

"I made you dinner," Hannibal said, pulling back.

"I can eat later." A token protest as he followed his Master into the dining room. Nights that were not set aside for feedings Hannibal would join him; he maintained an appreciation for the ritual of dinner with a friend though the food no longer sustained him.

Tonight his plate would remain empty.

Any time Will ate, but particularly on feeding nights, Hannibal watched him with a burning intensity, focusing on the movements of his jaw as he chewed, his throat as he swallowed, the way Will's fingers wrapped around the handle of the knife, and the motion of his fork as he speared his food and raised it to his lips.

Will tried to focus on the food. It was delicious as always, but Hannibal's intense focus on him only added to the coiling heat of arousal low in his stomach and the ache of the firm flesh between his thighs. His body hummed with anticipation. His right leg began to shake under the table.

Hannibal smiled. He had not sheathed his fangs and they hung, tantalizing, over his lower lip. He placed a calming hand on Will's thigh, pressing into the muscle with his thumb and rubbing in a soothing circle. Will bit his lip and sank lower in the chair, legs spreading further apart. He squirmed in the seat, his body reacting to his Master's touch without any conscious thought on his part.

The hand on his thigh crept higher, his breathing coming faster. He set down his silverware.

"Finished?" Hannibal asked. He traced the outline of Will's clothed cock with a single finger. Will's breath hitched and he whimpered, biting down harder on his lip and drawing blood.

Catching the scent immediately, Hannibal's eyes turned a deep red and he became preternaturally still, watching blood well in the place where Will had pierced his own skin.

Hannibal told him once that prolonged arousal gave his blood a stronger, more complex flavor, rather like aging a fine wine. They had been playing this game for months; Will content to allow Hannibal to take the lead, teasing him and keeping him on edge. But as Will took in Hannibal's singular focus on his pierced lip he felt suddenly bold. Worrying his lip further, he swiped at the blood with his thumb before reaching down to spread it along the length of his cock.

He was not aware of the movement as it happened, only that he was suddenly naked from the waist down with Hannibal between his legs under the table, his Master's tongue licking a stripe along his cock following the trail of the blood he'd smeared.

There hadn't been much blood: Hannibal cleaned it from his skin and pulled back quickly, causing Will to whimper once more. The arousal was beginning to border on pain, the clench of desire in his stomach turning from a pleasant ache to a cramp.

Thankfully, Hannibal either decided he was ready or decided to take pity on him, swirling his tongue around the head of Will's cock before pressing the tip of his tongue into the slit, tasting the fluid there. At the press of Hannibal's tongue into him Will moaned and gripped the edge of the chair tightly, his body shuddering with need.

Hannibal's fangs sank into his skin mid-thigh, lower than Will expected. Hannibal did not drink and did not lick the wound to clot it, instead gathering blood on his fingers before gripping Will's cock and stroking.

"Is this what you wanted?" Hannibal asked.

"Master," Will groaned. The sensation was odd though not unpleasant. His blood was warm but became tacky quickly; the slid of Hannibal's cool hand was not smooth. It was different

than being stroked dry, though the roughness still added an edge to the sensation, a prickling in his nerves that was driving him fast toward the edge of his orgasm.

“Close,” he choked out, knowing Hannibal likely did not want him to come yet. To his surprise Hannibal did not stop but instead wrapped his lips around the head and began to suck. The movement of his mouth was slow, as his tongue moved deftly over the skin, removing all traces of the blood smeared there. When he reached the root, nose nestled in Will’s pubic hair and the tip of Will’s cock pressing down into the back of Hannibal’s throat, he swallowed and Will felt his balls draw tight. He gripped the chair harder to prevent himself from bucking into his Master’s throat, knuckles whitening.

Hannibal made a low, rumbling noise in the back of his throat and pulled back, fangs grazing along the delicate skin as he did, and Will was lost to waves of pleasure, pulsing his release into the vampire’s mouth.

Collapsing back into the chair Will felt his Master pull away before fangs sank into his thigh again, higher this time, and the vampire began to feed in earnest. Will sighed, closing his eyes, lost in the hazy after-glow of his orgasm and the hard sound of his heart, beating in time with Hannibal’s swallows.

Chapter End Notes

it was truly my intention to do all these prompts, but I've had a lot going on in my personal life and I don't know if I will.

I still intend to try, but instead of catching up I'm falling further behind. :/

# The Lycanthrope

Abigail ran blindly through the forest, trying to ignore the pain radiating from her stomach. She hadn't been certain when it hit her, but it had definitely been silver. She'd tried to shift when she was first struck, thinking she could call for an ambulance, but she'd been unable to return to her human form. And now she could feel the poison seeping through her veins, her muscles slowly dying.

She wanted to give up, to curl into a ball under a bush and whimper, hoping someone would find her but knowing no one would. The woods were isolated at the best of times, but with a lycanthrope racing through the trees no animal would dare make an appearance.

Not that any of them would be able to help her even if they were brave enough to approach.

A jolt of pain shot down her flank and into her right rear leg and she howled her pain and rage into the night.

At the edge of the forest there was a doctor. He was not a shifter himself but he was a friend to shifters. He would help her, if she could only reach him.

*If he could. He would help her if he could.*

She pressed forward, wanting to stop but pushing herself to move faster instead. She spotted a house at the edge of the trees, a white two story with the porch lights shining like a beacon of life.

Her vision was beginning to blur.

She forced her legs to move, extending as far as she could between strides. *Almost there. Almost.*

She didn't see the root, catching her paw on it mid-stride. She cried out as pain shot through her and the world went dark.

*

She awoke in a soft bed, her legs cramping and her stomach clenching. For a moment she thought she might be sick, gritting her teeth and breathing harshly through her nose as the as the feeling passed. A cool rag was pressed to the back of her neck and she whined. The sound was still mostly wolf, though she had shifted back to her human form at some point during her sleep.

She opened her eyes, squinting at the face that appeared in front of her. She caught vibrant blue eyes, pale skin and a mess of dark curls across the forehead before closing her eyes again and groaning. "Are you the doctor?"

The laugh in response was soft and musical. It was lovely, but there was something *off* about it too. She knew the owner of the sound was very near, but it felt as though it came from a distance. Nor could she pinpoint the origin of the sound; despite being quiet it filled the room.

"No, Hannibal is the doctor." The voice was as melodious as the laugh.

"And you are?" Abigail asked, though she had difficulty forming the words through the pounding of her head.

"His assistant." There was an impishness to the voice, a teasing lilt. She suspected she would have found it pleasurable had she not been in so much pain. "There is a glass of water and some painkillers on the table," the voice instructed, tapping the table lightly to indicate its direction. Abigail opened her eyes just enough to see the glass and the small white pills, taking them gratefully.

She heard the sound of a door opening and closing and soon she was drifting back into sleep.

*

She might have been asleep for hours or mere moments when she heard the voice. It was different than the one she'd heard before: softly accented, coaxing yet authoritative.

"How are you feeling, my dear?"

The voice's owner was tall with silvery blonde hair and brownish eyes. The expression on his face was passive but there was a shrewd intelligence in his eyes that caused her to catch her breath in uncertainty. She reminded herself she'd come to this house because the doctor was a friend to shifters - and she could only assume the man before her was the doctor.

"Better," she said, cautiously, pushing herself into a seated position. The doctor inclined his head without smiling.

"You were in very bad shape when you arrived. May I ask what happened?"

Abigail swallowed. "I was shot," she said.

"Before that." It took her a moment to realize it was not the doctor who spoke, but the person who had been in her room earlier.

"Will," the doctor said, admonishing.

"It will benefit her to tell us, Hannibal."

Will trained blue eyes on Abigail's face and she was struck again that there was something *off* - something distinctly other. She took in the figure in front of her, now that she could focus on them. Will appeared neither distinctly masculine or feminine but more androgynous; hair falling messily about the their face, blue eyes kind but with a steely glint behind them that told her Will was not to be trifled with.

“You’re fae,” she said, only fully accepting the realization as she spoke the words. Will’s vibrant smile was an answer in itself. She smiled instinctively in response before her face fell, her gaze dropping to her lap. “Will you compel me whether I want to tell you or not?”

Will laughed, the same musical sound she’d experienced before. “I can’t compel you to do anything. I would merely suggest that unburdening yourself to friends would be beneficial.” Will’s face turned impish, chin tucked and eyes dancing merrily. “A secret among friends, so to speak. Wouldn’t you feel better?”

“I killed someone,” Abigail said. Neither Will nor the doctor visibly reacted, both watching her, waiting for her to continue.

She wasn’t sure she wanted to. She hadn’t intended to say anything at all but the words had escaped her, forcing their way past her lips.

She wondered if the fae hadn’t compelled her after all.

But as the silence stretched and still neither Will nor Hannibal reacted, she supposed that at least she wasn’t going to be thrown back out into the woods.

“Accidentally or on purpose?” Will asked gently, finally prompting her to speak. There was no judgement in their voice, but Abigail still bristled.

“She was - I wouldn’t - it wasn’t,” she paused, struggling. “She was someone I cared about deeply,” she said finally. “I would never have harmed her on purpose.” She thought maybe she should cry, but her eyes remained dry.

To her surprise, Will seated themselves on the bed and gently took her hand, squeezing lightly. “Young shifters - especially wolves - sometimes change unintentionally during moments of extreme emotion. It can be difficult to control yourself when the shift is so sudden.”

Tears did come, then, as Abigail nodded. She hadn’t even realized what had happened - what she’d done - until it was over and she was running, terrified. She hadn’t realized anyone was chasing her until she felt the bite of the bullet in her stomach; she just wanted to get away, to pretend it wasn’t real . . . that she hadn’t just killed her best friend.

“What do I do now?” she asked. Will shrugged and looked at Hannibal, who nodded.

“You may stay here,” Will said. “This is a safe space, no harm will come to you here.”

“And if I want to go home?”

“I assume your friend was human?” Hannibal asked. Abigail nodded. “Then there will be consequences, regardless of your intentions.”

“Maybe I deserve them,” Abigail mumbled. The room was silent for a moment, before Will pat her arm awkwardly.

“The choice is yours,” Will said, looking at the clock. “Leave before midnight if you wish to go.”

“And if I stay the night?” Abigail asked, confused.

“Then you stay with us.” Will’s smile, though still bright, shifted subtly, hinting at a sadness behind it. “Hannibal and I are here both because we choose to be, but also because we have no other choice.”

Abigail shook her head, not understanding.

“You have time to decide,” Hannibal said, reaching toward Will, “though only a finite amount.” Will reached out in kind, taking Hannibal’s hand and threading their fingers together. “You must make your choice.”

The room was quiet and still after they left. It was later than Abigail thought; the moon full outside her window.

It was a Wolf Moon, though she felt no urge to shift. Instead, a shiver of fear ran through her when she realized the Wolf Moon had been more than a month away the night she was shot. How long had she been there already? Why would she stay? (What did she have to go back to anymore?)

She should go.

She looked at the clock, an old digital variety, red numbers shining in the dark. The numbers were shifting steadily toward midnight.

Abigail made no move to leave.

# Adverse Weather Conditions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stepped inside the cabin quickly, pressing his weight against the door to close it. From across the room Hannibal saw him struggling to shut it and moved quickly to help, grabbing a board to brace the door once they'd forced it closed. Will looked at the other man and nodded, wordlessly. Hannibal inclined his head in response, the gentle weight of his hand coming to rest on Will's right shoulder.

Beyond the door came a howl - the same noise that had drawn Will outside earlier, into the snow and the wind. His ears were red and his cheeks rosy from the cold. His eyes widened at the sound but Hannibal shook his head.

"I don't believe it's a dog, Will," he said softly. "Don't put yourself in danger." Though he spoke the words plainly there was a plea behind them that surprised Will in its earnestness. He nodded, leaning into the hand still on his shoulder before nodding.

Hannibal smiled softly to himself after the other man turned away. The shift into his touch had been subtle - Will hadn't done it consciously and likely wasn't even aware of his reaction. While Hannibal longed to have Will consciously lean into and accept his touch, he was pleased that the young man had sought proximity to him, whether consciously or not.

Will was a treasure waiting to be discovered and appreciated and Hannibal had high hopes this trip would be his opportunity to get closer to the beguiling creature that was Will Graham. As he watched the young man move toward the fire to join their friends he thought that the trip was starting rather well, all things considered. It was supposed to be a ski trip, but the blizzard had arrived unexpectedly as they checked into the resort. They'd barely made it to their cabin before it hit in earnest. As they'd been choosing bedrooms, a howl had come from outdoors - the sound of an animal in pain - and Will had darted outside without a second thought.

It had the unintended but pleasing - to Hannibal, at least - consequence of leaving the room assignments up to the rest of the group. Alana and Margot took the master - having arranged the trip and managed all of the bookings - leaving three other bedrooms for the remaining five people. There was a smaller bedroom with a single bed, a larger one with two twins, and what was essentially a second master with a king size bed and en suite.

Unsurprisingly Frederick immediately lobbied for the single room, though in truth it took relatively little convincing from the group to allow him to have it. Randall and Francis were happy sharing a room but not a bed. Which left Hannibal and Will with the second master - and one king sized bed - to share.

Hannibal walked slowly back toward the fire, stopping to grab two glasses and a bottle of whisky from the surprisingly generous mini bar. He watched Will from the corner of his eye as he poured rather more generous amounts than usual into both glasses. Alana seemed to be

explaining the sleeping arrangements to him, squeezing his arm as the young man's eyes flitted nervously to Hannibal. He didn't look unhappy, Hannibal noted with pleasure. Uncertain, perhaps, but not displeased.

"Can I get anyone else a drink?" Hannibal asked, glancing to the group.

"Whiskey," Margot asked, voice slightly lower and rougher from the glass she'd already had.

"What whiskey are you pouring?" Frederick inquired. Hannibal hid a smirk. He was quite certain Frederick new nothing about whiskey; a feeling that was confirmed when he read the name and Frederick merely nodded. "I'll have a glass as well, thank you."

At least he was being polite.

Alana asked for beers for herself and Randall, while Francis declined altogether. At some point he'd made tea and was sipping it happily, staring into the fire. Hannibal took Will his glass of whiskey first, relishing the gentle brush of their fingers as he handed over the drink.

"Thank you," Will murmured. He watched as Hannibal handed a second glass of whiskey to Margot then moved to the fridge in the small kitchen, grabbing two of the beers they'd brought that he passed to Alana and Randall before finally returning to the bar once more and pouring his own drink.

Hannibal moved with an easy grace that Will enjoyed watching. Hannibal must have sensed Will's eyes on him, because he looked up from across the room with a small smile. Will smiled back and turned to the fire. He wondered if he should be embarrassed at being caught out, but Hannibal didn't seem to mind that he'd been watching him.

Will focused on the fire, aware of Hannibal moving to stand beside him. Another night the room would have been rowdier - they might have played games or done some more serious drinking - but everyone was subdued in the face of the unexpected weather and instead they drifted into an easy silence. For several minutes the only sounds were the crackling of the logs on the fire and the howling of the wind.

"Well, I hope the weather clears soon," Margot said, stirring on the couch. "There's not a lot to do up here besides ski."

"The cabin is very nice," Francis said quietly, eyes still locked on the fire.

"I agree," Frederick chimed in, "Quite acceptable, really, for such a rustic setting."

Will caught Hannibal's eye and rolled his own, watching in amusement as Hannibal lifted his glass to hide a smirk. Alana stretched and yawned, rising from the couch and earning a pout from her girlfriend.

"I think I'm going to turn in," she said. "It's been a long day."

There were several murmurs of agreement and everyone moved to their respective rooms - except Francis, who sat quietly continuing to stare at the fire. Hannibal picked up his bag

from where he'd placed it behind the couch, Will following suit and trailing after him toward their bedroom.

Will smiled to himself. *Their* bedroom. He watched Hannibal's back as they entered the room. There were times when he thought his friend's feelings for him might not be entirely platonic, and a few times he'd considered acting on it. But he'd never quite gotten the courage to make a move and the last thing he wanted to do was ruin the easy companionship between them. Still, the idea of it being *their* bedroom was a pleasant thought and Will supposed there was no harm in quietly indulging in it for the week they had planned.

"Do you have a preference?" Hannibal asked, pulling Will from his thoughts. Will looked at him, confused. Hannibal gestured to the bed. "Which side do you normally sleep on?"

"Oh," Will shook his head. "Doesn't matter."

Hannibal had moved toward the left side of the bed as they entered the room so Will moved to the right, closer to the outer wall and the window. "This is fine." He set his bag down and began rooting through it, looking for his pajamas.

"Did you want the bathroom first?" Hannibal asked gesturing toward the door off the left side of the room.

Will shook his head. "You go ahead." He changed quickly and pulled out a book, stretching out on the bed to wait for his turn in the bathroom. He was mid-chapter when Hannibal returned, settling down on the bed next to him.

"What are you reading about? Insects?" There was a teasing lilt to his friends voice and Will smiled as Hannibal moved toward him to look over his shoulder. "Ah, not insects then."

"No," Will said, turning his head to meet Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal was even closer than he'd realized and their noses nearly brushed. Will felt his pulse speed up. He pulled back, setting his book down on the nightstand and mumbling something about brushing his teeth. Once inside the bathroom he closed his eyes and leaned against the door, slowing his breathing and quieting his thoughts. He was almost positive Hannibal had been staring at his mouth.

When he returned to the bedroom Hannibal had nestled himself into the blankets on his side of the bed, leaving a generous amount of space in the middle.

"We can place pillows down the middle if you'd like?" Hannibal offered

Will laughed. "No need. Sharing a bed with you doesn't bother me." He flushed slightly at his friend's pleased expression, hiding his face as he pulled back the comforter on his side and wondering if maybe he *should* be a little worried about it.

He turned off his light, rolling onto his side with his back to his friend. "Goodnight Hannibal," he said.

"Goodnight Will." The light behind him flicked off and he closed his eyes against the dark.

He was jolted awake several hours later by a loud crash from outside. Momentarily disoriented, he looked over at Hannibal who was also sitting up in bed, clearly surprised but looking far more awake and alert than Will felt.

“What was that?” Will asked, running a hand through his hair. He stood, moving to the window of the room. The weather seemed to have calmed some but the night was dark and must have been cloudy - there was no light from the moon or stars. Will heard Hannibal rise from the bed and move to stand behind him. He imagined leaning back into the other man’s chest. Maybe Hannibal would wrap strong arms around his middle, pulling him closer.

He pushed the thought away determinedly, staring out into the dark of the night. He thought he saw movement out by the tree line and watched with renewed alertness, feeling Hannibal’s eyes on him turn more inquisitive. There was the subtle hint of movement again, and Will focused on it.

“There’s someone out there,” Will said softly. Hannibal moved closer still, so that they were very nearly touching. Will breathed in sharply through his nose. The longer he looked the clearer it was: a differentiation in the shadows, a space that was darker then the rest of the night.

Will moved forward unconsciously, nose nearly touching the window, as he struggled to make out the shape of what he was seeing. Suddenly there was a loud crack of something hitting the wall and pale yellow eyes and sallow skin pressed up against the window for the briefest of moments before disappearing into the night. Will moved backward quickly, running into Hannibal who gripped his biceps, holding him steady.

“What the hell was that?” Will asked. He turned to look at Hannibal, undeniably comforted when the other man didn’t remove his hands, instead relaxing his grip only enough to allow Will to turn to face him before squeezing his arms once more.

“I don’t know.” Hannibal was still staring out the window, thoughtful. He released Will, moving closer and looking out into the night. Beside him Will shifted nervously. There was no movement outside the window. Hannibal looked back at Will, taking in his sleep rumbled pajamas, mussed hair and wide but still tired eyes. He wanted to pull the other man into his arms and comfort him. “Whatever it was, it seems to be gone,” he said. “I suggest we try to sleep and investigate in the morning.”

Hannibal left the window and climbed back in to the bed, watching as Will turned back to the window, fidgeting.

“I don’t know if I can,” he said. “What was that thing?”

“Something to leave for tomorrow,” Hannibal said, more firmly. Will looked at him shrewdly but instead of saying anything else he lifted the covers and climbed into bed. Though he rolled onto his side so that his back was facing Hannibal once more, he was lying closer than he had been before and slowly scooted closer still.

Tentatively, Hannibal reached an arm out and rested it gently on Will’s hip, ready to pull it away if the other man reacted negatively. Instead Will closed the rest of the distance between

them, pressing firmly into Hannibal's chest as Hannibal wrapped his arm around the young man's torso.

"Sorry, I guess I'm a little freaked out," Will said softly. Hannibal tightened his grip.

"No need to apologize, Will," he said, resisting the urge to kiss the crown of curls now nestled snugly against him. "We'll figure it out in the morning."

Hannibal woke again several hours later, immeasurably pleased to realize that Will had not shifted away from him in the night, but instead had his head resting against Hannibal's chest, one arm slung lazily across his stomach.

It would have been a lovely waking, had he not heard the frantic noises of their housemates through the door.

Francis was gone.

Chapter End Notes

This also feels like the start of something much longer.

# The Monster in Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first time flowers showed up at his house Will laughed it off, thinking it must have been a wrong address.

They were sitting on his porch when he arrived home, a small but prettily arranged bouquet of pink camellias and chamomile. It was - at least to Will's untrained eye - an odd combination. He lifted them and brought them into the kitchen, setting them by his sink and retrieving the card to determine who the intended recipient had been.

To his surprise, his name was printed clearly on the envelope. He pulled out the card. It wasn't signed, but the quote left no doubt as to the sender.

*In that book which is my memory, on the first page that is the chapter when I first met you appear the words 'here begins a new life'.*

Will sighed. He removed the flowers from the vase, dumping the water down the drain and throwing the flowers in the trash.

Two weeks later another arrangement appeared; this one red and yellow tulips. Will scowled when he saw it. He considered leaving it on his porch, but he brought it inside, dumping the water and throwing the flowers in the trash. There was no reason to read the card, but as he stared at the little square envelope tucked against the stems of the flowers he found his fingers reaching for it without his permission. He didn't open it, instead placing it in a drawer which he the immediately shut. Firmly.

Arrangements continued to arrive biweekly: violets and yarrow, a dwarf sunflower plant, pink and red carnations, a variety of daffodils.

Will looked at the latest: a lovely combination of ferns, forget-me-nots and baby's breath. He had to give it to whatever florist Hannibal was using. They did an excellent job.

"This is getting ridiculous," Will said, running a hand through his hair. He picked up the vase and took it inside. He removed the card, ready to place it in the drawer with all the other unread cards. He stared at the small pile he'd collected, wondering why he didn't just throw them away.

Without making a conscious decision he opened the card in his hand and pulled out the note.

*Love, that exempts no one beloved from loving, seized me with pleasure of this man so strongly that, as thou seest, it doth not yet desert me.*

Will scowled, annoyed at the pleasant feeling the words evoked. He looked at the flower arrangement, considering. Hannibal was always one for metaphor. Will moved to the table,

opening his laptop.

Forget-me-nots were a rather obvious choice, but Will searched for ferns (sincerity and humility, though Will couldn't imagine Hannibal being *humble* about much) and baby's breath (love and *innocence,* of all things).

From there it was easy to find the meanings of the other flowers: almost all meant some form of love or devotion. Will rubbed his face. Hannibal Lecter was declaring his love. Will wondered briefly how long it would continue without a response from him.

Probably quite some time. Chamomile was one of the few flowers that did not explicitly mean love, but instead 'patience in adversity.'

Hannibal had turned himself in for Will, and now he was prepared to wait.

Will poured himself a whiskey. What was there to say, really? Hannibal wanted Will to miss him and, despite his best efforts not to, Will *did.* He missed their talks, he missed the closeness and acceptance. He missed the way Hannibal made him feel when they were together.

But this couldn't continue. He searched a few other items before finding and printing the image he needed. Though Alana would question why Will was sending Hannibal mail, he was certain she'd allow it to be delivered. After all, all that was in the envelope was a picture of a flower: butterfly weed. *Let me go*.

For several weeks there were no flower arrangements. Will stopped looking for them Tuesday afternoons - though he'd never really been looking for them, had he? It was for the best. It was what he'd wanted.

Winston whined and licked his hand and Will realized he'd been standing in his kitchen, staring into space, for quite some time. He feed the dogs and poured a whiskey, seating himself on the couch to begin grading.

Two days later he came home to an arrangement on the porch. Irises. Will wasn't surprised to learn they meant hope. He opened the card.

*The path to paradise begins in hell.*

Will smiled and rolled his eyes. The man did love his Dante.

He left the vase on his kitchen table. Clearly Hannibal hadn't been deterred from sending them, so he might as well enjoy them.

The next delivery was a dozen red roses. Will flushed when he saw them. Hannibal wasn't even being coy anymore. Opening the card he was surprised not to find a quote by Dante but instead a single word. Will stared at it, pouring himself one whiskey and then another.

He opened the drawer where he'd been collecting the cards. Some of the quotes were surprising: *Lost are we, and are only so far punished that without hope we live on in desire.*

That card was on top and must have been from one of the last deliveries before Will responded. Most of the quotes were about love, the majority of them Dante.

*Now you know how much my love for you burns deep in me when I forget our emptiness and deal with shadows as with solid things.*

Will opened his laptop as he continued to read, propping the most recent card against the screen and staring at word there, so carefully written that it almost mirrored Hannibal's flowing script. *Beloved*.

Will pulled up a search screen and began to type.

*

"You got something else from Will," Alana said, passing mail through the slot.

"You looked at it, I presume?" Hannibal asked

"Of course I did."

Hannibal smiled. Alana was still occasionally amusing to him, and he appreciated her bluntness. "I assume then, that there was nothing you needed to confiscate."

"It's another picture of a flower," she said, staring at him. Hannibal betrayed nothing, taking the mail and placing it on his desk to open later before lying down on his cot. Alana may have read it all already, but he didn't care to read it in her presence.

"Aren't you going to open it?" she asked.

"I have no need to," Hannibal countered, "since you have already informed me of its contents." He rested his hands casually on his stomach, closing his eyes and listening to her harsh breathing. Her frustration was quite enjoyable and Hannibal allowed himself a smile, knowing she would be aware it was at her expense.

She scoffed and left. Hannibal remained on his cot for some time after she had gone before getting up to open his mail. He left Will's for last, though he had been longing to open it since the moment Alana told him it had arrived.

Inside was the image of red chrysanthemum. On the back of the picture was a quote:

*From there we came outside and saw the stars.*

Chapter End Notes

since flowers can sometimes have different meanings, I mostly referred to this website

All of the quotes I included on the cards and the one Will sends Hannibal are Dante

# The Undead

Chapter Notes

> *facepalm* somehow I managed to post this chapter earlier to an entirely different work that had nothing to do with this. I have no idea what I was doing and no excuses.

Reality didn't sink in until they arrived back at Will's house and started unloading canned goods, bottled water and bullets. Will laughed harshly as they unloaded the trunk. Were these the essentials to survive a zombie apocalypse? Despite the vast number of movies on the subject there were no guidelines on how to proceed.

Will had read the CDC's blog on zombie survival and had followed all their instructions for preparedness. Not because he thought zombies were a real threat (neither did the CDC for that matter - at least, not at the time he'd read it) but because emergency preparedness was wise.

He did not, however, believe any form of preparedness rose to the level of being ready to face actual hoards of the undead.

"Will?"

He hadn't realized he was still laughing until Hannibal said his name. He coughed, shouldering another grocery bag.

"Sorry," he said, though he wasn't sure the apology was needed. "It's all so absurd."

Hannibal said nothing but gave him an unreasonably worried look as he lifted another bag himself and led Will into his own house.

It took several trips to bring in all the groceries, but once everything was out of the car and stowed Hannibal made tea and suggested they move to the porch. Virginia weather in May is typically pleasant, though it cools overnight, and the evening was no exception. Will pulled on a light sweater and found one that had always been large for him but that he'd never given away, giving it to Hannibal.

Though a part of him wanted something much stronger, he accepted his mug of tea gratefully and settled down in a patio chair, Hannibal occupying the other one. For a long time Will had only had one, and he was glad he'd purchased the second as he watched Hannibal recline in it. The doctor gave the appearance of relaxation, as though they were two friends spending an evening together. In fact, the whole scene was so domestic they could have been roommates or lovers and it would not have seemed out of place - except for the shotguns

resting against their chairs and the laser focus Will kept on his dogs as they did their business in the yard.

As the dogs settled on the porch Will shifted his focus from his pack to the man seated next to him. He felt he should say thank you, or possibly offer an apology, but he wasn't certain which or how to broach the subject. If Hannibal hadn't come by when he did, he would have been at his home in Baltimore when reports started coming in. Now, Baltimore was overrun. There was no returning.

At least not at any point in the near future.

"If you're concerned that I'm dissatisfied with our current arrangement you needn't be," Hannibal said. He turned to meet Will's eyes, gaze steady. Will looked back, able to maintain the contact for longer than normal before he moved his focus to Hannibal's chin. The man's face shifted in response, his mouth curling in the slightest hint of a smile. "If anything I believe we are much safer here. The isolation will be helpful and meant that grocery stores were not overrun."

"They will be soon," Will mused. "We were lucky."

"Yes," Hannibal nodded.

"I don't know if I have any clothes that will fit you." Will looked to the horizon, scanning the distance. "We should have picked some up while we were out."

"Better to be back here. We relax while we can and we prepare."

"Prepare for what?"

Hannibal was silent, his eyes now scanning the horizon, following the same path Will's had only moments earlier. "The unknown."

Will stood, feeling the need to pace. "I don't know how you can be so calm."

Hannibal was quiet once more, watching as Will moved back and forth but making no move to join or attempt to calm him. "Humans are inherently predatory," he said eventually. "We are not used to feeling like prey."

Will stopped, meeting the other man's eyes for the second time that evening, the question clear on his face. Hannibal rewarded him with a broad smile. "We are not prey now, either, Will."

Nodding, Will seated himself once more. He was used to being patient and still; waiting for a fish to notice his lure and bite. Hannibal seemed to notice his shift in mood, the other man's smile shifting in turn to something more fond.

"What now?" Will asked. He felt much calmer, though some latent anxiety still seeped into his voice.

Hannibal reached out, curling his fingers lightly around Will's wrist and running his thumb carefully across Will's skin. "I suggest we sleep while we can." His voice was soothing. Gentle. Will recognized the same quality in it that he used when picking up a new stray. A careful timbre designed to convince a frightened animal there is no threat.

It was annoyingly effective.

"I'm grateful I was here when we got the news, Will," Hannibal said, voice pitched lower than normal. He had not released Will's wrist. "Had I been in Baltimore we would each be alone in this. I am grateful for the company."

Will withdrew his wrist slowly, but before Hannibal could pull away he caught the other man's hand, threading their fingers together. "Me too," he mouthed but did not speak.

He sensed Hannibal heard him anyway.

# "...and add a monster"

Chapter Notes

> extra apologies for any possible grammar/spelling issues in here. I'm pretty tired today but I wanted to post this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal loved his film class. He enjoyed collaborating with his classmates on projects, bringing characters to life in front of the camera, figuring out how to create low cost special effects, studying camera angles, workings on scripts, and analyzing the films they were assigned to watch.

He *enjoyed* all of those things very much. But he *loved* his film class for a different reason. And that reason was Will Graham.

Sure, Hannibal had been interested in film and had signed up for the class before he knew of Will's existence (though how he'd missed it over the past three years at university was beyond him). But he'd signed up for the class at the urging of his best friend Alana who suggested he "take something fun". He'd been pushing himself hard for three years; pre-med with a double major in psych and biology. Alana had lovingly called him "a workaholic" and told him he needed to "chill out". She'd also suggested dating, something he'd found laughable.

Until he'd walked into film class and met the love of his life.

Bright blue eyes, pale skin, unruly chocolate curls, pert nose, lips that begged to be kissed and a lean figure that Hannibal suspected hid quite a bit of muscle. These were the first things he noticed about Will.

His love was also a bit of a brat, something that might otherwise have been irritating but that Hannibal found endearing.

He suspected Professor du Maurier would disagree. Each time Will challenged an opinion or made a sassy comment (he was not a fan of Eraserhead, which appeared to have earned him the ire of several Lynch aficionados) Hannibal felt his stomach flutter. Dr. du Maurier, on the other hand, would set her lips in a thin line and say "thank you for your input, Mr. Graham."

Still, Will was more ingrained with the class than Hannibal. Most of the students were theatre kids and had known each other either for the duration of their university experience thus far or, in some cases, since secondary school. Hannibal had managed to endear himself to them by proving he was actually a decent actor - after his first project he'd been sought after for assignments - but he had not managed to gain Will's attention.

So naturally he was elated when they were placed in the same group for the final project.

*

All did not go as he'd hoped.

Hannibal wasn't sure what he'd been envisioning. Maybe the film class was getting to him. Had he honestly thought that Will would walk into a room and fall suddenly into his arms? Or that he could sweep the owner of those angelic curls and ocean blue eyes off his feet with almost no effort?

It was clear from their first handshake that Will was not so easily swayed. His hand was warm, grip firm, fingertips surprisingly callused. Hannibal committed each item to memory, maintaining his hold on the other man's hand longer than was polite, though Will did not attempt to pull away. Instead Will's eyes, firmly focused on Hannibal's chest, flicked upward, meeting Hannibal's gaze for the briefest of moments before tracing a path from nose to ear to chin.

Hannibal felt electric.

Will, on the other hand, didn't appeared affected. "Should we sit?"

"Yes." The response came from Margot, the third person in their group. She shot Hannibal a knowing looking as Will moved to sit down.

Hannibal liked Margot. She was self-assured and assertive despite an overbearing father and a brother that took great pleasure in causing her pain. The two of them had become close over the course of the semester. She'd asked him for help with organic chemistry. He'd initially been surprised at the request, but she was studying business and agricultural sciences hoping to take over her family's business when she graduated. It was supposed to go to her brother but Mason was, in her words, "kind of a douche."

Will was entirely professional during their firsts meeting - and every meeting after. He took notes, worked collaboratively to develop dialogue and story lines and was incredible in front of the camera, fully embodying the character he was portraying.

After their third meeting Hannibal asked Will if he wanted to get coffee. After the fourth, drinks.

Given that Will had declined both invitations it seemed foolish to escalate to dinner. Instead, Hannibal offered to walk back to the dorms with him. Will looked at him warily but accepted.

They walked companionably, making some small talk but largely in a comfortable silence. It was a much shorter walk than Hannibal would have liked - but it was something.

"This is me," Will said. His voice was softer than normal.

"So it is," Hannibal said. His hands twitched. Will's curls had been mussed by the wind and he longed to run his fingers through them. He pictured cupping the other man's cheek,

running a thumb across red lips to see if they were as soft as they appeared. Leaning in to brush their noses together, angling his head and shifting so their lips met in the lightest graze. Would Will gasp? Would he moan? Sigh?

But Will had given no indication he wanted that and Hannibal made no move; instead standing less than arm's width apart, quietly aching.

"Well, goodnight," Will said, turning quickly and heading into the dorm.

"Goodnight," Hannibal called, belatedly, as the door was closing behind him. He thought maybe Will turned his head, but it was difficult to be sure with the door obscuring his view. Hands stuffed in his pockets, he walked slowly back to his apartment and called Margot.

*

"Oh, that's just Will," Margot told him, reclining on his couch. He sat on the carpet on the opposite side of the thrift store coffee table, staring at the Hawaiian pizza resting on top of it. He'd never understood the concept of Hawaiian pizza, but it was Margot's favorite and it had come with her when she invited herself over for dinner.

She propped her head on her hand. "You like him."

"I hardly know him," Hannibal pointed out, though he could feel his skin heating. It was a poor excuse and if Margot's ever-widening smile was anything to go by he wasn't fooling anyone.

"You two would be good together."

Hannibal flushed darker. "I don't even know if he's into guys. Could be a lost cause anyway."

Margot shrugged at that. "He's pretty closed lipped, honestly. He dated a girl named Molly at the beginning of our first year. Didn't last long - a few months, maybe."

"That would suggest he likes women," he said, his tone was overly casual.

Margot laughed, pleasantly. "That doesn't mean he *doesn't* like guys, you know. One can never assume. Plus, he and Molly really didn't seem that suited for each other. Of course, that had more to do with their personalities." She took a large bite of the pizza and followed it with a swig of beer. "But also, I caught him checking out your ass the other day."

Hannibal nearly choked on his drink. "What now?"

More musical laughter followed. "He denied it when I called him on it, but he was beet red. And he was *definitely* looking."

Hannibal ate his pizza, unsure how to respond. He knew he was fairly red himself.

"Will's pretty introverted," Margot said. "Sometimes he can be hard to read, but he's into you."

Hannibal shook his head, far from convinced.

*

Still, at the end of their next meeting Hannibal, thinking of Margot's words, asked if he could walk Will back to his dorm.

"Oh - um." Will didn't look at Hannibal as he gathered up his things, putting his notebook and pencil back in his backpack. "I'm not going to my dorm, actually." He swung the backpack over his right shoulder.

"Another night then," Hannibal said, fighting the urge to demand to know where he was going and why. He argued with himself internally about whether or not he would want to know if Will had a *date,* and *that's* why he wasn't going back to his dorm. He'd finally determined that the friendly thing to do would be to inquire about his plans, whether or not he truly wanted to know, when Will broke into his thoughts.

"I tutor," Will said. He rubbed the back of his neck, his eyes focused squarely on Hannibal's chest. When he spoke again his voice was softer, reminding Hannibal of the way he'd said 'good night' only a few nights earlier. "I'm going to Merten Hall, if you'd like to walk there with me?" His chin ducked further and mumbled. "I know you live off campus, it's probably out of your way."

"I'd lo - be happy to," Hannibal said. Will looked up then, giving him a wide, genuine smile. Hannibal felt his breath catch in his throat. As before they walked mainly in silence, but Hannibal was hyper aware of both Will's breathing and his own, the slowly lessoning distance between them and the sound of their steps slowly synchronizing despite Hannibal's longer legs.

"What do you tutor?" he asked when they were about halfway there.

"Biology, mainly," Will said. Hannibal thought he might continue, but he fell silent again.

"Do you like it?" Hannibal coaxed.

Will shrugged. "It's ok. I signed up to tutor through the school. Needed the money." The last part was quieter, as though he'd prefer not to admit it.

"There's nothing wrong with working hard to earn your dreams," Hannibal said. It was something his Uncle had once said to him, and he'd found it motivating.

Will did not appear to share the same opinion. He stiffened slightly and responded with a clipped "I know."

Hannibal was quiet, berating himself silently. He finally felt he'd made some progress in getting to know the young man and already he'd misstepped. He could apologize. Explain this it was something his Uncle had said and that it was meant to be motivating. He didn't know Will's history, family, or current situation - though he would like to know everything

there was to know about the young man walking next to him - and he hadn't meant to offend. Will hadn't moved further away or picked up his pace, despite his stiffened posture.

As Hannibal ran through his options Will stopped. It was such a sudden halt that Hannibal continued to walk forward for several steps before realizing Will was no longer with him and turning around.

"I'm sorry," Will said. He held his arms out in a placating gesture for the briefest of moments before he appeared to curl in on himself: he stuck his hands in his pockets, his shoulders drooped, his chin tucked. "I'm not good at this."

"At what?" Hannibal asked, genuinely confused.

"Small talk. Getting to know people. Conversation in general." He glanced up at Hannibal briefly, his eyes dark and defiant though when he spoke his voice was so quiet it hardly carried across the scant space between them. "Talking to someone you like."

Hannibal's chest clenched as he took a desperate breath. Someone he 'liked' did not necessarily mean romantically, he reminded himself. "Seems like you're doing fine," he said, gently.

Will made a hard sound, not exactly a laugh. "Yeah, fabulous." He started walking again, Hannibal falling into step beside him. They were nearly at Merten Hall when Will began talking again, speaking quickly. "I started school early so I'm not legally allowed to drink yet but if you want to get a coffee sometime I'd really like that I just couldn't before because I had to tutor but I have tomorrow night free if you even like me and I haven't totally ruined this."

His face was slightly flushed his chest heaving with exertion. He licked his lips, drawing the bottom one into his mouth and sucking.

Hannibal could simply have said yes, but instead he gave in to impulse. Will's lips were as full and soft as he'd imagined, his taste as sweet. It was a relatively chaste kiss, though Will's lips parted with the promise of more and Hannibal barely resisted thrusting his tongue into the other man's mouth, claiming him thoroughly.

"Oh," Will said softly as Hannibal pulled away. Hannibal chucked lightly in response.

"Until tomorrow?" he asked.

Will nodded, walking unsteadily into the building.

- 

Two days later the three of the met in front of their classroom, waiting to show Dr. du Maurier the rough cut of their short film. Hannibal was still riding the high of the previous night when their coffee date had turned into an intense make-out session that had been on the verge of turning into something more when they'd called it a night.

Hannibal arrived first, followed by Will, who still looked sleepy and gloriously disheveled. Ashe leaned in for a kiss, Hannibal wondered what it would be like to wake up to that image each morning. One kiss became two, then three, and four increasingly sloppy and with more and more tongue until they heard someone clearing their throat.

“Can you two keep it in your pants for our meeting?” Margot asked, though her expression was far from unhappy. She winked at Hannibal and mouthed ‘I told you so.’

Hannibal placed a chaste kiss to Will’s forehead. “Let’s see what our professor thinks so far,” he said, opening the door and ushering the other two in before him.

“Mr. Graham, Miss Verger, Mr. Lecter,” Professor du Maurier said as they entered. She seated herself - not behind her desk, but on top of it. “I enjoyed the rough cuts you gave me,” she said. “The romance angle comes across as entirely genuine; I think you should highlight that more.” Margot snickered, while Will and Hannibal stared at her dumbly.

“Thank you, Professor,” Margot said. “We’ll work on bringing that out.”

“And add a monster,” Professor du Maurier commented, looking over the three of them. “It’s supposed to be a horror story, after all."

Chapter End Notes

I am definitely taking some artistic license with these prompts, lol.

# A Baby Monster

When Hannibal heard the bell ring shortly after 4am his first thought was of Will. No one else would dare stop by at this time of night (and no one else would be welcomed in with open arms.)

His second thought, on opening the door and seeing not a man, but a baby's bassinet, was, oddly, also of Will. Specifically he wondered why someone would leave a baby on his porch and not Will's, though he conceded that was a strange thought to have. Probably had to do with the man's habit of picking up strays.

His third thought, as he pulled aside the sheet draped over the bassinet and bright red eyes stared up at him, was that the baby was clearly not human.

Which begged the question of why it had been left on his doorstep.

He picked up the bassinet and carried it inside, placing it on the kitchen counter before starting coffee. He had a feeling he was going to need it. While the coffee was brewing he picked up his phone and dialed the only person he could think to call - and the only one who would likely pick up the phone.

A very sleepy Will Graham picked up on the fourth ring. Hannibal faltered at the sound of his voice.

"Hannibal?" he called sleepily, though the phone. "Are you ok?"

"Can you come over?" Hannibal asked, disliking the neediness in his voice. He heard Will stifling a yawn and the sound of covers being pushed to the side. He pictured Will swinging long, muscular legs over the side of his bed. He was probably wearing boxers and one of those tight white t-shirts he favored. Or maybe no shirt at all.

"What happened?" Will asked. Sounds on the other end of the line became more rushed and urgent. He pictured Will pulling on jeans and a sweater, or maybe one of his flannel shirts.

Hannibal sighed. "I'm ok, Will. There was a baby on my porch."

Will's end of the line went suddenly silent. Hannibal might have thought the call had disconnected, except for the continued sound of fast breathing.

"Someone left a baby on your porch?" Will asked at last.

"Yes."

"You need to call the police, Hannibal."

"It's not human."

The other end of the line went quiet once more. "Demon?"

Hannibal glanced at the bassinet on his counter. “I haven’t fully investigated, but I believe so.” He paused. “Bright red eyes and suspiciously quiet.”

“Male or female?”

“As I said, I haven’t fully -“

“Hannibal.” Will interrupted. Hannibal could practically hear him rolling his eyes. “I’m on my way. Try to relax.” He ended the call without so much as a goodbye.

Pouring himself a coffee, Hannibal pushed aside the sheet on the bassinet. Once again, bright red eyes looked up at him. But this time the baby made a soft gurgling sound and lifted a tiny fisted hand to its mouth, sucking on the knuckles.

Hannibal dropped the sheet, swearing he heard laughter from the walls as he did. An hour and Will would be there. Will would know what to do. In the meantime he sat, drinking coffee and staring. Occasionally a cooing sound would come from inside the bassinet, but mostly it was silent.

It wasn’t natural for a baby to be so silent.

*

Only 50 minutes had passed when Will let himself in through the front door. Hannibal was aware of the passage of time according to the clock but the wait had seemed both to stretch into eternity and to cave into itself. He had been waiting his entire life and yet no time had passed - or perhaps time had stopped only in this room.

He looked up as Will entered the kitchen. He was wearing jeans and a a black sweater Hannibal had never seen before. The dark color brought out the rosiness of his cheeks and the blue of his eyes. He looked over Hannibal once, face pleasant but unsmiling, before stepping to the bassinet and pulling the sheet aside.

The baby made a soft gurgling sound and Will did smile then, a smiled that brightened the room and made Hannibal feel lighter. Gently, Will lifted the baby from its basket. He stuck two fingers in the front of the diaper and pulled it away from the little body, peering inside.

“Female,” he said. The baby regarded him with those bright red eyes. “Hello little one,” he said, rocking her softly. He turned to Hannibal and smiled. “What will you name her?”

“Eleanor,” Hannibal answered without thinking.

Will seemed surprised at that, pausing his rocking. He raised his eyebrows. “Really?”

“Why not?” Hannibal bristled, defensive, though he was asking himself why he’d chosen that name as well, particularly so quickly and without thought.

Will lifted the arm not holding Eleanor in mock surrender. “I expected Mischa, or Beatrice maybe.”

Hannibal shook his head. “She’s not mine,” he said. It felt like a lie.

A low chuckle fell from Will’s lips, reminding Hannibal of the laughter that had echoed through his walls earlier. His eyes were shining.

Was it Hannibal’s imagination, or did they appear to be changing?

“But she is, isn’t she Hannibal?”

As Hannibal watched, Will’s eyes shifted from vibrant blue to bright red. They seemed to burn through his skin. Hannibal swallowed.

“You wanted a family,” Will said. “Eleanor is my gift to you. Something that is ours to share.” Will pulled back and kissed her forehead before placing her back in her bassinet. “Though I confess you surprised me little one. I did not expect you here so soon.” When he turned to Hannibal his eyes were blue once more. He reached across the counter and took one of Hannibal’s hands gently in his own.

“Her eyes will settle soon,” he said, “and she will only reveal herself when she desires to.”

“What are you?” Hannibal asked.

Will laughed. His eyes shifted from blue to red. “I am the same as I have always been, Hannibal. But together, we are more.”

Eleanor gurgled in her bassinet, and Hannibal ran a finger gently down her tiny cheek. Will had come to stand behind him, one hand on his shoulder.

*We have much to discuss, my love*.

The words echoed through the kitchen, and Hannibal reached for Will’s hand.

# The Alien

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will was standing on the back porch when it happened. Alana had been in the kitchen making tea, but she must have looked out the window to see the streak of grey cut through the sky because she rushed out to join him, reaching for his hand as the inevitable crash followed.

She gripped him tightly and he squeezed her hand in response. For several minutes neither of them moved or spoke. Will concentrated on his breathing, their joined hands hanging between them, the loose strands of Alana's hair being lifted away from her face in the breeze, her redder than usual lips. She'd been using a new lipstick lately. Will didn't like it. He preferred her more relaxed and natural - but then, she wasn't trying to impress *him,* so he'd refrained from commenting.

"I suppose we should go check out the damage," she said eventually. Will smiled at that. Alana could always be counted on to be practical. She would sift through her emotions and then focus on what needed to be done rather than what needed to be felt.

And what needed to be done was to check out the damage to their cornfield.

"I'll start the tractor," Will said, releasing her hand and heading for the barn. She met him a few minutes later, climbing onto the two-seater and making herself comfortable next to him. They didn't speak on the way to the field - in part due to the noise, but also because there was little to be said.

They both knew what had happened.

When the fleet surrounded the planet five years earlier its inhabitants had waited for the inevitable invasion. None came. Instead, the ships remained in orbit around the planet.

The orbit had begun to decay. The first ship impacted the ground nearly a year ago. They'd been falling more and more frequently since. It was a wonder no one had been killed.

And now, one had fallen into their cornfield.

He held his breath as they neared the site of the impact. Like the others, the ship was spherical in shape. It was made of a dark metal that shimmered in the light, its edges seeming to blur if you looked for too long. Its impact had caused a deep crater, taking most of the cornfield with it. Will mentally calculated the loss of the crop, knowing Alana was doing the same.

"I'll file it with the insurance," she told him, without needing to be asked.

Will walked the perimeter of the crater, taking in the craft, as Alana watched from the side of the tractor.

The construction of the craft was so uniform it was impossible to tell front and back. It matched all the other descriptions Will had read. Nothing new or unusual to note. They would report it to The Agency in the morning and it would be taken away within a day.

There was something appealing about seeing it with his own eyes. Will had been mesmerized by the articles he read, pouring over them in the morning at breakfast. Alana was not nearly so enthused. He looked across the crater at her pale, drawn face, colorless except for her too-red lips. She ran a hand through her long, dark hair as she met his eyes, shaking it lightly so that it swayed behind her shoulders.

Will had always liked her hair.

He looked back into the crater. The circle was near perfect and he took a few steps further around the edge, surprised when he saw something that hadn't been in any of the articles he'd read: a hole.

There was an opening in the sphere, a pane of light emerging from inside. Without thought or explanation to Alana he began scrambling down into the crater.

"Will?" Alana called after him, and Will felt a twinge of guilt at the fear in her voice.

"It's open," he called back.

"Then why are you going down there?" her voice was shriller than he'd ever heard it.

"It's fine, Alana," he said. "I'm fine." He felt no fear, only an intense curiosity. As he moved closer the light faded and something fell from the craft before the opening sealed, concealing itself entirely. Will looked to the ground. The figure was curled on its side. The curve of its legs partially covered its genitals but Will could see enough to determine it was biologically male. The man appeared to be fairly tall - probably taller than Will, though not by much - with a fit, muscular build. His hair was a silvery blond with a few darker streaks of brown and he had fine, angular facial features. His eyes were closed.

"There was a man inside," he called up to Alana.

"What?" she shrieked. Will didn't think it was possible for her voice to get any higher. A moment later she appeared to have control of herself once more; her voice more even, her practical nature taking over. "We need to call someone."

"We need to get him back to the house," Will said. He wasn't sure how exactly they were going to do that in the tractor, so Alana agreed to head back and return with the truck. Though her voice had been controlled when she left Will suspected she was relieved to get away.

It would take her at least 10 minutes to get back to the house on the tractor, then another 10 to get the truck and come around on the road. He would need to get the man out of the crater

and up to the edge of the road. The man didn't move when Will came near, nor did he flinch at Will's touch. In fact he made no movement whatsoever. Will might have thought he was dead if not for the soft rise and fall of his chest.

He managed to roll the man onto his back, hooking him underneath his shoulders and standing. The man was heavy. Will could probably carry him, but not out of the crater itself. Instead he backed out, dragging the man behind him, thankful for the soft ground. It was undignified but it worked.

Once out of the crater he was able to maneuver the man so that he was carrying him on his back, making his way to the part of road that was nearby.

The process had taken longer than he'd thought and Alana was already waiting, looking anxious.

"I tried to call The Agency but the phone wouldn't connect."

Will nodded, feeling a surprising sense of relief. She would have told them about the man, too, and something was telling Will not to say anything.

"We'll call them in the morning," he said.

Alana crossed her arms. "And him?"

"I'll put him in my room, where I can keep an eye on him."

"I don't think that's a good idea, Will."

Will exhaled slowly through his nose, trying to rid himself of the irritation he felt. Alana always wanted to do what was best for him, though privately he thought sometimes she might do better to *ask* him what he wanted or how he felt about things. But they had been friends for a long time and he would not have purchased the farm in partnership with her if he didn't believe she had his best interests at heart.

And she *did* have a point. They knew nothing about this man - this *alien* - and what his purpose was being here. But Will didn't sense any threat.

"The ships have been in orbit for five years, Alana," he said. "They've done nothing. Whatever the purpose, it doesn't speak to an intent to harm or attack."

Alana said nothing, regarding him solemnly with stormy blue eyes. She opened the rear door of the cab, helping Will as best she could to get the man into the back. They made the brief drive back to the house in silence. Once there she helped Will carry the man up the stairs, taking his feet while Will held him under the arms. They deposited him on Will's bed. She looked Will over and said a terse "good night" before retreating down the hall to her room.

Will knew she would be locking her door that night, something she rarely did.

Will pulled a chair to the side of the bed, positioning it close but not too close. Despite the man's languid form - he had not stirred once during the entire ordeal of getting back to the

house - and Will's certainty that there was no imminent threat, he wasn't quite foolish enough to sit too close.

He watched the steady rise and fall of breath in the man's chest, taking in the rest of his form once more with a bright, burning sense of curiosity. As the night grew long he grew more tired, though he had no intention of sleeping. He closed his eyes, thinking to rest them for only a moment.

When he opened them, sunlight was streaming through the window and the man was seated upright on the bed, looking at him curiously. Will sat up quickly, knocking his arm on the side of the chair as he did and cringing at the sudden pain. The man stood, reaching for Will's arm.

"It's fine," Will said, shaking his head and pulling it closer to his body.

"I used to be a doctor," the man said. His voice was softly accented but Will had no trouble understanding the speech. He reached for Will's arm once more and Will allowed it. The man's touch was soft.

"No serious harm done," he said.

"You wanted to see if I would allow you to touch me," Will accused, causing the man to break into a broad smile.

"Yes."

"Why can I understand you?"

"I confess I'm a bit surprised by that myself." The man shrugged, acknowledging the mystery but unconcerned with its solution.

Will chewed on his lower lip. He heard noises in the hall - clearly the man did as well, because he looked to Will's door with a confused expression.

"Alana," Will said by way of explanation. "We usually start our day much earlier. Lots of chores to be done on a farm."

"Your wife?"

Will shook his head. "Friend. Roommate. Business partner. Alana is a lot of things - but not my wife, no." It was probably his imagination but he thought the man looked pleased at that.

"Why are you here?" Will asked.

The man furrowed his brow, a concerned look appearing on his face. He fixed reddish brown eyes on Will. "I don't remember," he said.

"OK," Will continued. "Then where are you from?"

The man's brow furrowed once more. He shook his head. Will watched him silently. The man didn't appear to be hiding anything. He looked like he was genuinely trying to think of the answer. He was quiet as he chased whatever thoughts were int her recesses of his brain. "What's your name?" he asked after some time.

"Will. Do you recall yours?"

The man smiled once more. "Hannibal," he said, clearly grateful to remember his own name.

Will's eyes shifted to the window, looking out at the copper sky. "Perhaps the things you don't remember will come to you in time." But Hannibal shook his head nearly immediately.

"I don't think so," he said. "I don't think I'm meant to remember."

They fell quiet once again, uncertain how to proceed, continuing to watch each other - for what, Will was uncertain, but the same intense curiosity continued to burn through him.

"You're beautiful," Hannibal said quietly, like perhaps he hadn't meant to say it aloud. Will felt himself flushing. "What will you do with me?" Hannibal asked in a stronger voice.

Will shook his head. "Alana already tried to call The Agency but the phone wasn't working." he grew concerned at the thought, hoping the phone had not been fixed.

"And you?" Hannibal asked.

"I don't know," Will said, genuinely. "But I don't want to turn you in. I think I would like you to stay."

Hannibal smiled. "I think I would like that very much."

Chapter End Notes

Me: I need to make these responses shorter
Also Me: writes 2k words.

Ok then, Dove.

And of course it's more fluff lol.

# The Domesticated Monster

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will resisted the urge to pull away when he felt hands on his shoulders, helping him out of his jacket. He allowed the garment to be taken away and hung on the rack in the foyer, breathing deeply in and out before sitting on the bench to remove his boots. Hands moved to help him with his laces but he swatted them away, unable to handle anything more than his jacket being taken. Dark, lifeless eyes looked at him. He never thought he'd miss the particular gleam that had long been a part of Dr. Chilton's eyes; the man's constant belief he was on the edge of greatness shining through.

He never quite made it past the edge.

Instead, he'd been lost in the abyss.

"I told him to assist you," Hannibal said. Will hadn't heard him arrive, but that was not unusual.

"I let him take my jacket," Will argued.

"He needs to feel useful." Hannibal watched Will with a softly amused expression.

"What he *needs*," Will paused after the word, "is to be six feet under. It was cruel of you to reanimate him."

The reanimated Dr. Chilton looked at Will and grunted. He had enough sense to know he was being spoken about, but most of his brain function appeared confined to fine motor skills. Will wondered how much was really going on in the man's head. He was Hannibal's version of Frankenstein's monster; a man toyed with but not allowed to die.

"Let him help you with your shoes, Will."

"If anyone is helping me undress it should be you," Will muttered, low enough that he could claim to be talking to himself, though they were both aware he intended Hannibal to hear. Hannibal moved closer before bending down to speak directly into Will's ear.

"I'll be happy to assist you with the rest of your things later."

Before Hannibal, Will would have sworn that the sensation of a tongue in his ear was not one he enjoyed - but like everything Hannibal did he found himself leaning into it, wanting more. It was frustrating, really, the way he sought Hannibal's touch. It didn't matter if the touch brought pain or pleasure - or sometimes both at once - the more he had, the more he wanted.

Chilton had undone Will's laces and removed his left boot before Will realized. He sighed and allowed the . . . whatever he was to remove the other one.

“Our own reanimated butler?” Will cocked an eyebrow at Hannibal, who had pull back but not away.

“Something like that,” Hannibal said, placing a kiss on Will’s forehead. It was always the same spot, always over his scar. Hannibal would allow his lips to hover, running them over the raised ridge of skin before kissing it gently. Will had wondered more than once at the action. He suspected it was Hannibal’s way of demonstrating gratitude that his impetuousness had been interrupted. He also knew Hannibal would never admit to that if it were true.

He didn’t ask, instead watching as Chilton stored his shoes on the rack.

“He does seem to be doing better with small tasks.” The admission came reluctantly. Hannibal had been experimenting with teaching the former Dr. Chilton basic tasks to do around the house. Domesticating his monster. Will suppressed a shudder. It was ghoulish, really. This was one of Hannibal’s whims he would never get used to. He wondered if Hannibal would have reanimated him, had he died from the stabbing.

He could not have had he eaten Will’s brain - Chilton was only here because his body was mostly intact, if damaged.

He leaned forward, resting his head against the front of Hannibal’s shoulder, glad to be alive. *Alive*, alive.

“He is,” Hannibal agreed, looking at his monster. “Though I am still having trouble getting him to stop digging in the garden. He keeps tearing up the begonias.”

Will laughed quietly. “Heaven forbid.” He glanced over at Chilton, his laugh catching in his throat.

It had to have been his imagination, but he could have sworn he saw the monster smirk.

Chapter End Notes

Necromancy is just one of Hannibal's many skills ;)

# Clothing Your Monster

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Living with anyone was bound to have its challenges. Particularly after a life that had been led in a largely solitary manner for more than 30 years. But a life with Will and Abigail was worth any and every challenge. Hannibal had no regrets.

Or so he told himself as he stared at the shredding clothing on the floor of the living room. It was the third time that week. The french doors from the living room to the backyard were open, the grass lightly trampled where the two of them had taken off running. They had undoubtedly headed for the forest behind the home. They loved to chase each other through the trees, heading for the stream where they would lie on the banks, occasionally darting into the water for fish.

Hannibal removed his clothing, folding it carefully and placing it on the couch.

Was it so difficult to undress before shifting?

He strode naked out into their yard, feeling the pleasant tingling in his limbs that preceded the change. It had hurt the first several times, but the scream in his nerves had soon given way to pleasure as his bones rearranged themselves, his limbs growing, his skin darkening and his body hair becoming thicker.

He rolled his neck as his paws hit the ground, solid and heavy. Scenting the air, he bounded over the grass, feeling the difference in texture beneath his feet as it turned to dead leaves at the end of the trees, following the trail of his family.

It didn't take long to find them. As expected they were lying on the bank of the river, still in wolf form. Abigail was dipping her paws in the water. Will lay beneath a tree, eyes closed. Hannibal paused for a moment, taking in his mate's wolf form. Will retained his blue eyes when he shifted, but they were currently closed. Most werewolves had differentiated colors - a darker muzzle, shading around the eyes, darker tails. Will was a solid silver throughout, light refracting off his luxurious coat. Hannibal strode over and nuzzled his mate, nipping him lightly. Will wagged his tail, thumping it against the ground as Hannibal grabbed and pulled at his scruff, eliciting a whine that caused Abigail to look up and then look quickly away.

Had she been in human form she would have rolled her eyes. She yipped and huffed before turning and focusing back on the river. It was the wolf equivalent of "get a room," which she liked to say quite a bit in human form.

Hannibal curled up next to his mate, resting his chin on Will's stomach and enjoying the soft rise and fall of his body. From the bank came on the sound of splashing. Will opened his eyes and began to rise slowly, dislodging Hannibal.

Abigail had caught a fish - a large one that would easily feed the three of them for dinner. She wagged her tail happily as Will licked her cheek, proud. Gripping her prize firmly but careful not to break the skin, she gestured with her head that she was heading back to the house before trotting away.

Will looked at Hannibal, blue eyes and silver fur shining in the waning sunlight. He walked into the river, turning his body to look behind him in invitation. As Will sank down into the water he began to shift, his limbs thickening and elongating, silver fur receding, hair once again the a delightful mess of brown curls. There were a few strands of silver, though, and as Hannibal shifted himself he lifted a hand to run fingers through his mate's hair, separating out the errant strands.

"I don't know why you enjoy the signs of my aging so much," Will quipped, though the statement held no real ire.

"It matches your coat," Hannibal said. "I never understood why your hair color changed."

Will laughed, softly. "Why does yours? You're so dark when you shift you could be a panther." He ran fingers through Hannibal's hair before pulling him further into the water and kissing him deeply. The water felt cold against his skin in a way it didn't when he was in wolf form, but there was something intoxicating about the heat of their bodies moving together and the cold of the river swirling around them.

"You know you ruined another set of clothes," Hannibal said, speaking into his mate's mouth. Will threw his head back and laughed.

"Did I?" he asked, eyes twinkling. "Well, sometimes when the mood strikes." He nipped at Hannibal's jaw. "Besides, you love buying me clothes."

"That doesn't mean you need to ruin them," Hannibal said, but the statement didn't carry the force he'd intended. He was having trouble concentrating on his irritation with Will pressing kisses into his neck and trailing fingers down his sides and across his stomach.

"It's the same set," Will said, fingers pressing firmly into Hannibal's hips, pressing them closer together in the middle of the river. He smiled at Hannibal's confused expression. "If you'd looked closely, you would have realized it's the shirt the neighbor gave me that I always hated and an old pair of slacks. I was waiting for you to notice."

"There are better ways of baiting me." Will laughed again at his irritation, placing kisses along the line of his jaw.

"I believe I am gifted at baiting you in every possible way, *Doctor*," Will said, licking over the bite mark on Hannibal's shoulder, "or you would never have allowed me to turn you."

Hannibal growled, attempting to tighten his grip on his mate, but Will pulled away and headed for the shore. "Let's head back," he said. "You can dress me for dinner."

"And if I prefer you as you are?"

Will only smiled. He turned toward the house, shifting and beginning to run in one fluid motion, leaving Hannibal no choice but to follow.

Chapter End Notes

A bit of creative license with this prompt as well. same general idea, I suppose.

Also I realized as I was writing this I read another writer's response to this prompt on Twitter where Will was a wolf and I must have unconsciously adopted that - but the premise of the fic is still different, even if that element is the same.

# The Mermaid

Will sat on the edge of the dock. The market had closed up an hour earlier and he knew he should return home to his dogs. It had been a good day; he'd sold the majority of his catch and what was left would feed him for several days. He swung his legs in the air, enjoying the movement of the air around his bare feet.

It had been hard, earning the respect of the villagers. Will was a good fisherman - at least as good as his father had been, if not better - but he was young. The villagers expected old men with sun-wizened skin, not a kid with a soft face. He was grateful every day he went home with enough money to keep up the house, buy some supplemental food for himself and feed his dogs. He didn't need much else.

He heard footsteps behind him but didn't turn, nor did he look when the boy seated himself on the other end of the pier.

Matty was a few years old than Will. He and his father were crabbers and sold their catches at the market a few stalls down. Matty always stopped by to say hello. Will wasn't sure how he felt about the older boy. There was something odd about him, but he'd always been friendly with Will and that was a lot more than could be said for most people in town.

"Waiting for something, Will?" Matty asked. His tone was pleasant enough, but there was something behind it - that same something that always set Will on edge and made him wonder.

"You know," Will said.

"It's not gonna show," Matty said. "Stop looking and come have some fun. We can go to the park."

Will shook his head. He knew Matty was probably right, but he still had hope. And he wasn't sure he wanted to be alone with the other boy. "No, thank you Matty."

Matty pushed himself up, muttering something that Will didn't catch under his breath. Something about Will being foolish, no doubt. Will bit his lower lip, trying not to care. He knew most of the town thought he was strange. He'd always been a quiet boy. Then his father died when he was 16, leaving him the house. He'd been worried it would be taken from him, but no one seemed to have any inclination to force Will out of the property, so the fact that he was living alone as a minor was largely ignored. He'd started selling fish at his father's stall. A few people bought out of pity, then more people bought when they realized his fish were large, reasonably-priced and properly sourced. Now at nineteen he no longer had to worry about the house being taken - at least, not because of his age - and he had a decent following at the market.

He had a good life. He was happy.

But he would still spend a few hours after the market closed sitting on the edge of the pier, looking for the mermaid.

Spot one, catch it, and they would grant you a wish - or so the legend said. Will didn't know what he would wish for, but he still hoped to see one.

"Your friend's right," came a voice from behind him. It was a new voice. Will turned to look. Standing behind him was an older gentlemen with dark skin and dark eyes. He had a strong, authoritative air about him but a kindness, too. He smiled and Will smiled in response.

"You won't see one from the pier," the man said. "Let me show you where I found mine."

The walked along the edge of the bay, Will trying to keep pace behind. For as old as he appeared to be, the man walked surprisingly fast. Will was out of breath when they finally stopped at the top of a rocky, secluded beach. The man gestured toward the water. "Here," he said. "There's a small cove down near the water. They seem to like this space."

"They?" Will asked, surprised.

The man smiled. "I saw several here. Caught one, had a wish granted. I come back occasionally to watch them swim."

Will rolled from his heels onto his toes, grinning widely in excitement.

"What will you wish for, young man?" The older man asked.

"My only wish is to see one," Will said, hugging himself tightly and rocking in his excitement.

"Then I am certain you shall have your wish." The man gestured toward the water again and Will, taking the invitation for what it was, ran surefooted down the rocky incline toward the water.

It wasn't long before ripples appeared in the water and a head emerged. Will gasped. The head swiveled his direction, dark eyes fixing on him before it submerged in water once more. Will assumed it was swimming, but there was no indication on the surface of the water to indicate which direction or where it might have gone. Will ran down to the edge of the bay, stepping into the shallow water lapping onto the beach. The mermaid appeared to have disappeared. Will sighed. He supposed he'd gotten his wish. He had seen one, however briefly.

He was about to turn and head back onto the beach when something grabbed his leg and pulled him under. He didn't even have time to scream before his lungs were filling with water. They emerged from below the water a short distance out and Will heaved, expelling water before coughing and sucking in deep, gasping breathes. A hand brushed the hair out of his face.

Will tried to push away, but strong arms held him. "What the hell?" Will asked when he could catch his breath.

"How did you find this place?" a voice asked.

"A man showed me," Will said, still coughing. "He said he saw lots of mermaids here."

"Jack," came a soft voice from further away. "Let him go."

"Yeah, let me go Jack." Will said.

A soft rumbling sound ran through the chest of the mermaid holding Will. "I'm not Jack. The man who showed you here was Jack." Will looked up. It was the same face that had appeared out of the water earlier: dark eyes, dark hair, sharp cheekbones. "I am Hannibal."

Will shivered. "Ok. Can we go back to shore now, Hannibal?"

"Grab onto my back," Hannibal said.

Riding a mermaid back to shore was a unique experience. It was fast. Hannibal stopped a short distance from the shore where Will could stand and walk the remaining distance. Once at the edge of the water, Will sat and looked back at the mermaid.

"What's your name?" Hannibal asked.

"Will."

"What would be your wish?"

"I didn't catch you," Will said, surprised.

"If you had."

"I don't have one." Will hugged his knees to his chest. Hannibal's tail swished in the water. It was a lovely forest green color.

"There's nothing at all that you want?" Hannibal asked, surprised.

Will shrugged. "I wanted to see a mermaid."

"Then I suppose you got your wish," Hannibal said. "So perhaps you'll grant me one?"

Will hugged himself more tightly. What on earth could a mermaid want from him? He nodded, curious.

"Come back tomorrow."

*

Hannibal had seen the boy sitting on the pier before he appeared at the cove. He knew the boy was looking for a mermaid, and he'd been tempted to make himself know. There was

something about that intense, pensive gaze over the water that intrigued him. But showing himself at the pier would have been foolish - too many people - so he contented himself to watching the boy. Sometimes another, slightly older boy would join him. Hannibal didn't like the look of the older boy; there was a certain oily maliciousness to him. He would try to sit close, but his boy - Will, now that Hannibal knew his name - would always move himself further away. It probably wasn't even a conscious action on his part, but an innate knowledge that he should keep his distance. Once or twice the older boy leaned toward Will, perhaps saying something suggestive or merely uncomfortable, causing Will to flush furiously.

Hannibal enjoyed the view if not the cause. The boy was young but looked even younger than his years; his face held a youthful softness though his eyes were hard with experience. They changed with the light, but when Hannibal had grabbed him and they emerged together from the water his eyes had been a sharp, biting blue. Hannibal pictured the boy's soft curls pressed firmly to his cheeks, the water dripping from his dark lashes and the pout that had been on those soft red lips.

Up close he was more beautiful than Hannibal had imagined. He frowned, thinking of the way Will had curled into himself when asked about a wish. A wish it appeared Hannibal had already granted. He smiled as he pressed himself into a recess in the rock of the cove, closing his eyes to sleep.

The boy reappeared as promised the following day, standing at the edge of the water. He was barefoot, his toes curling into the sand. He hugged himself, staring out across the cove. Hannibal allowed himself several moments to watch before he revealed himself from behind the rock. He was greeted with a bright smile.

"You're here!" Will said, exuberant.

"So I am," Hannibal replied. He leaned back, allowing his chest and stomach to appear above the surface, before curling his back and making a circle through the water, emerging once again so that only his head was visible. When he looked up Will was watching him, rapt. The boy climbed onto a rock, pulling his knees to his chest.

"What's it like to be a mermaid?" Will asked.

"What's it like to be a human?" Hannibal countered.

Will shrugged. "Nothing special. I imagine it's much more interesting to be a mermaid."

"You might be disappointed."

The boy hugged himself tighter. "I doubt it."

"Would you become a mermaid, if you could Will?"

Will tilted his head, his fingers picking at the soft hair on his legs as he thought. "It would be tempting," he said. "But I couldn't leave my dogs."

“You show them the same loyalty they show you.”

“They are my truest friends.”

There was something beautiful and tragic about that, Hannibal thought.

Will excused himself soon after, citing the need to feed his dogs, but not before Hannibal extracted a promise for the boy to return again the following day.

He repeated the request the next day, and the day after that, and then again, and again, until eventually he no longer asked; they both assumed Will would be returning. Months passed, and Hannibal quickly found that the time he spent with Will was the part of the day he enjoyed most. More and more the boy lingered, leaving later and later in the evening.

Hannibal found it increasingly difficult to watch him go.

*

Will didn’t know what to do. Seeing Hannibal was his favorite part of the day. He dreamed about the mermaid at night and daydreamed about seeing him while fishing and selling his catch.

“Are humans able to become mermaids?” Will asked one day.

Hannibal swished his tail, something Will had noticed he did when he was surprised and unsure how to answer.

“Yes,” Hannibal said, slowly. “Though it requires sacrifice.”

“What kind?” Will pressed.

“Why so curious, Will?” Hannibal asked in lieu of an answer.

Will shrugged. He wasn’t sure he wanted to answer. He thought that he and Hannibal were friends, but he didn’t know how his friend would react if he knew the content of Will’s dreams; how Hannibal touched him, hands and lips roving lovingly over Will’s skin.

These were Will’s deepest fantasies, making their way to him at night and leaving him strained and wanting in the morning. He shifted before climbing down from the rock, hoping to take his mind away from such thoughts. Instead he waded into the water, burrowing his toes into the wet sand and feeling the squelch of it beneath his feet.

“Will?” Hannibal called, his voice soft and gentle.

Will didn’t look at him. “If I were a mermaid I could stay with you. I wouldn’t have to leave every night.” He raked his toes along the sand under the water.

He wouldn’t be alone anymore.

He couldn't bring himself to speak the words. He looked up to see Hannibal watching him intently. His friend's face was clouded. Will felt his chest tightening in a mix of shame and desire. Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes.

"I have to go," he said quickly before taking off at a run, at the mercy of the sudden need to put distance between himself and Hannibal.

He returned the next day, but Hannibal did not.

For a week he arrived at the same time each day. Once he thought he saw a mermaid out in the distance and he tried to get their attention, waving his hands wildly in the air. But either they didn't see him or they didn't care to speak to him.

On the eighth day Will gave in and cried. He pressed his face hard against his knees, concentrating on the feeling of pressure and trying to quell his tears. When there were none left to cry he looked out over the water and said a soft goodbye before heading home.

He did not return the ninth day, or the tenth, or the eleventh.

But in the end he couldn't stay away.

It was the fourteenth day since he'd seen Hannibal. Two weeks. It had been a poor fishing day and a rough day at market. Matty had made another unwanted overture that Will found himself almost accepting. At least Matty showed interest in him; otherwise Will had only his dogs.

In the end he decided they were better company.

Still, he was sad and found himself wandering after the market closed, heading back to the secluded beach where he had once felt happy.

There was something different. He could feel it as he walked down to the beach, though he couldn't have explained it. A buzzing in the air, perhaps, as though the beach were more alive than usual. Will speed up, eager to make it to the water.

He was about to climb his rock when a head emerged.

"Hannibal?" he said softly, incredulous.

Hannibal didn't speak, instead moving toward Will into the shallow water. Will thought he would stop, but instead he continued moving closer and closer to the beach, his shoulders and torso emerging from the water, followed by his stomach, his waist, his - legs?

Will's jaw dropped as Hannibal walked out of the water and onto the beach, cringing as he did.

"Hannibal?" Will's voice was trembling.

"Will," Hannibal said. His voice was tight, as though he were in pain.

Will wanted to go to him, but he felt rooted to the spot. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry so he did both, the laughter bubbling as his tears flowed freely. "I thought I'd never see you again."

"I"m sorry," Hannibal said. "There was something I had to attend to." Will's eyes traveled from Hannibal's feet up to the top of his head. "I wanted to give you your wish, Will. The one you wouldn't speak."

Will shook his head. He didn't make a wish, and even if he had - "I never caught you."

"But you did," Hannibal said gently, stepping closer.

"I didn't wish for anything, Hannibal."

Hannibal stepped closer still, and Will felt the heat radiating from his friend's newly human body. "Then perhaps it is my own wish," Hannibal said, "though I hope it is one you share." He placed two fingers under Will's chin, tipping his face up and closing the distance between them.

The kiss was soft. Tentative. But it was Will's first, and he would remember it with a special fondness well into his old age. He gasped, lips parting, and Hannibal took the opportunity to deepen the kiss. Will felt his body tingling down to his toes.

"I did wish for this," he said, breathless, when Hannibal pulled away. "I did." He smiled, taking Hannibal's hands in his own. It was time to go home, but this time he wouldn't be leaving alone.

# The Gentle Kaiju

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It made sense that it was a dog, Hannibal thought, looking up at the towering beast. It appeared to be a German Shepherd, though Hannibal was far from an expert on dog breeds. He wondered what fantastic amount of sausage it would take to convince the animal he wasn't a threat next time he came snooping through Will's home.

Much as Hannibal wanted to learn the other man's secrets he had to admit the enormous dog was causing him to have second thoughts.

"He's friendly," Will said, genially, as though there were not a five story tall hound in his backyard. The dog towered over Will's own house. "He seems to be ok in the woods, but I worry about him."

Hannibal looked at his friend - friend? he'd like them to be . . . something - with a bewildered expression on his face. The dark hulking beast that loitered beneath Will's skin was entirely dormant as he looked at the dog. In its place was an expression of pure joy that Hannibal found equally as intoxicating as Will's rage and pain; a fact best filed away to be examined later.

"What will you do with him?" Hannibal asked.

Will shrugged. "I don't know where he's been living. He seems to be able to feed himself, somehow. He took some treats from me, but mostly he seems to want attention. He likes my pack."

Hannibal wondered what was considered a 'treat' in this circumstance. A whole chicken? A roast?

The creature opened its mouth, tongue hanging out, and panted lightly. Saliva pooled at the tip of the dog's giant tongue, falling to the ground and splashing. Luckily Hannibal had stepped back far enough. Will was hit by some of the spray, but he didn't seem to care. Hannibal fought the sudden urge to pull him inside for a shower.

"*Kaiju*," Hannibal said, staring up at the animal. It moved its head to draw its tongue along the length of Will's body. Will laughed gleefully, a sound that sent an odd shiver down Hannibal's spine.

"*Kaiju?"* Will repeated, pronunciation precise but uncertain. Hannibal nodded.

"Japanese," he explained. "It means 'strange creature' but is most commonly applied to the giant creatures seen in movies."

"*Godzilla* takes Manhattan?*"* Will quipped, expression still pleased and amused. The creature was looking at Hannibal.

"Yes," Hannibal said, staring back at the dog's dark eyes. "That's one example."

"*Kaiju*," Will said, smiling at the dog. The dog thumped its tail in response, a shuddering vibration running through the ground beneath Hannibal.

The dog's tongue flicked out again, this time grazing along Hannibal's side. He shivered, but Will clapped, childish in his glee. "He likes you, Hannibal."

"What will you call him?" Hannibal asked, shaking his arm in a vain attempt to rid himself of some of the dog's slobber.

"Ok, dog" Will said to the creature, "what is your name?"

The dog merely looked back. Will threw out some suggestions, but the dog didn't react to anyone of them. And Will was clearly waiting for some short of reaction. "Fine, then, *Kaiju."* Will muttered, frustrated. The dog thumped its tail.

"*Kaiju?"* Hannibal said to the dog. It thumped its tail again and opened its mouth in what appeared to be a smile.

"Well," Will said, as though something had been decided. "Kaiju it is."

In his excitement, Will reached out and took Hannibal's arm, pulling him close. "Have you ever seen anything like it?" he asked.

Hannibal shook his head, reveling in Will's warmth and closeness. The large creature would certainly throw a wrench in Hannibal's plans/ But that was another thought he pushed away to examine later, instead leaning into Will and watching as the dog turned, narrowly avoiding the trees, and settled down to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

And tonight, we have this silly little piece. :)

# Monstrous Transformations

Will was no stranger to waking in a cold sweat, his dreams chasing him for several long moments before he emerged once more to the stark reality of his room, quiet but for the breathing of his dogs. He reach a hand around to his back, pressing under his soaked t-shirt and feeling nothing but his own spine.

He sighed in relief. He'd been certain there were thorns sprouting from his back. He sat up straighter, his hand moving further up his back as he did. He stilled.

There was something protruding there. Something sharp and spindly.

He pulled his T-shirt off quickly, ran to the bathroom and turned his back to the mirror, craning his neck to see.

There was definitely something there. It was like a large thorn, dark and sharp. He pressed a fingertip against it, feeling the pressure against his skin. He pressed down harder, feeling the skin break. A sharp pain followed and he put his finger in his mouth, tasting the copper of his blood.

It was his nightmare come to life.

He wasn't sure what to do, so he dressed normally and determined he would make a doctor's appointment as soon as the office opened.

Much to his surprise, his coworkers made no comment about it. He kept rubbing below it as they spoke, trying to focus on the body on the slab in front of them as Bev explained their findings. Eventually she stopped talking. "Back bothering you?" she asked.

"Just this one spot," Will said. She moved behind him, putting a gentle hand over his. Will stiffened at the touch, but Bev merely moved his hand and pressed a thumb into the muscle he'd been rubbing.

"You are pretty tight," she said. "You should get a massage. Or some muscle relaxers." She released him, stepping away, and Will did feel slightly better. He ran a hand up his back and didn't feel anything. Maybe it had been in his head to begin with? He pressed the finger he had pricked to his thumb. It felt tender, but he couldn't see the cut when he looked at it closely. He sighed. Maybe all he needed was a good night's sleep.

He was hopeful when he left Quantico that day. Jack hadn't called him out on anything else and it wasn't one of the evenings he met with Hannibal. He was free to go home to his dogs, make dinner, have a drink, and go to bed.

It sounded sublime.

*

He woke at 3:37am, soaked in sweat. In his dream more thorns had emerged from his spine, his back curling beneath their weight. He'd thrashed and torn the bedsheets, his finger and toenails lengthening into claws as he scrambled from his bed. He'd been reaching for his phone, thinking to call someone to help him.

"Will?" He heard his name, disembodied, coming from the sheets.

What on earth?

"Are you ok?" The voice was muffled but easily recognizable. Will's hands moved quickly under the sheets until they hit on what he was searching for.

"Dr. Lecter?" he asked, lifting the phone to his ear.

"Will." There was a clear sense of relief in Hannibal's voice that took Will by surprise. Under any other circumstance it would have pleased Will to hear a break of any sort in the doctor's composure.

But it was nearly 4am and he had - apparently - called Hannibal in his sleep in the throes of a nightmare, doubtlessly waking him. All Will could feel was embarrassed.

"I'm sorry, I don't know - uh," he trailed off, unsure what to say.

"Is everything ok, Will?" Hannibal's voice was soothing even over the phone. Will swallowed, shaking his head, knowing Hannibal couldn't see it. No, everything was not ok.

"Fine," he said. "I must have rolled onto the phone and dialed you somehow. I'm sorry I woke you."

"Will, if you need to talk -"

"I hope you can get back to sleep. I'll see you later tonight."

"Of course," Hannibal said smoothly. "Sleep well, Will."

Will tried to lie back down, but it felt like something was pressing into his back. There was nothing on the bed.

Maybe he really did need that massage.

Deciding instead on a hot shower he made his way into the bathroom, pulling off his soaked t-shirt as he did. It ripped when he pulled it over his head, the fabric tearing down the center. Shocked, Will turned his back to the mirror, twisting his neck to look as he had the day before. There were four of them now, piercing the skin above his spine. They looked a bit like the thorns of a rosebush. Will felt his breath coming faster.

What was happening to him?

As before, he dressed like normal, went into work, and no one commented. Will could still see them. He could feel them pinned beneath his shirt, the fabric of it stretched too tightly across his chest. Stepping into the bathroom midday he turned. The protrusions were there, clear as day.

Were his colleagues simply too polite to comment on it?

He squeezed his eyes shut tightly, slowing his breathing. When he opened his eyes once more and looked back at the mirror nothing had changed. It was either a hallucination he couldn't shake, or it was real.

He wasn't sure which was worse.

*

"Something's wrong with me," he said immediately on entering Hannibal's office, causing the other man to quirk an eyebrow in another uncharacteristic show of emotion. The part of his brain not consumed with panicking thought that two in less than 24 hours was likely a record.

"Why do you think that?" Hannibal asked gently, ushering Will to his seat. Will bent forward slightly, rolling his back. He was extremely sore. It was a moment before he realized Hannibal had stopped and was looking at his back, fingers hovering over his spine. Their eyes locked for the briefest of moments before Will's settled on Hannibal's chin.

"You can see them," he said. Without thinking Will began to unbutton his shirt, removing it quickly and tossing it onto the chair. Hannibal was staring at him, silent, his face betraying nothing.

"May I?" he asked, hand once again hovering over Will's back. Will nodded. Hannibal brushed gentle fingers along his spine, grazing the edges of the thorns - or whatever they were - and tracing over them. He moved from beside Will to behind him and bent down, placing a kiss next to the lowest one. Will sucked in a breath, surprised, but said nothing. After a brief moment Hannibal kissed up the rest of his spine.

Will felt strong hands grip his shoulders and pull him upright. This time he could feel the thorns sheath themselves into his skin.

"I thought they were in my head," he said.

"They are and they are not," Hannibal replied, running fingertips down Will's now-smooth back. Will made an irritated noise at the non-answer while at the same time pressing backward, ever so slightly, into the pressure of Hannibal's hand.

"What are they?" he asked softly.

"A manifestation," Hannibal said. "You are changing."

"Turning into a monster?" Will asked, though from the way Hannibal was looking at him the other man clearly didn't think that.

“You fight your change, Will. You are who you have always been.”

“Then how am I changing?”

Hannibal’s smile was amused. “You are realizing your potential. Recognition of what has always been often leads to a powerful transformation within ourselves.”

“So I am becoming myself. With thorns sticking out of my back.”

Folding his hands behind his back, Hannibal beamed at Will. “So you are.”

Will sighed, running a hand through his hair, noting how Hannibal’s dark eyes tracked the movement. He felt suddenly exposed, reaching for his shirt. Instead of redressing he gripped it tightly in his hand, turning to face Hannibal directly.

“What is it I’m realizing?” Will asked, meeting Hannibal’s eyes and watching his expression closely. Hannibal’s face remained impassive.

“Tell me about your dream,” he said. Will thought he might move to sit, but instead he remained standing. Will did as well. “The one that resulted in you calling me.”

“I dreamed I had thorns. I woke up and they were real.”

Hannibal said nothing, face still carefully arranged in a mask of calm indifference. Will focused on his nose.

“I had claws,” Will continued eventually. “I was stuck, I needed help.”

“And that was it?” Hannibal probed gently.

Will pressed his lips together. “Yes,” he said, though as soon as he spoke the word he realized that wasn’t true. There had been more. There had been a man. A man in the darkness, beneath him. And Will wanted to rip into him. He wanted to open him and devour his heart. Will’s own heart rate had picked up, his breathing coming faster and shallower. He felt the thorns in his back release, his nails growing. His spine curled, and he sank to all fours.

“What’s happening to me?” he panted. There was no real pain, only an odd tingling sensation and a sense of urgency that he couldn’t place. His vision went red, a high pitched sound buzzing in his ears.

Hannibal crouched in front of him. “Tell me, Will. Speak it and accept it.”

Will shook his head, gritting his teeth. “I wanted him to die,” he bit out. “I wanted to be his death.”

He sank further down, curling on his side on the floor. Above him, Hannibal smiled.

# Angels and Demons

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal was standing atop the Transamerica Tower when he first spotted him, walking casually along Charles Street. He was walking in opposition to the crowds but parting them easily, his hands stuffed in his pockets and his soft curls bouncing gently in time with his steps. He made himself purposefully small and unremarkable but a few people in the crowd still noticed him, glancing over their shoulders after he had passed, likely telling themselves he reminded them of someone they knew.

Of course Hannibal knew what he was right away. He wasn't enacting any influence, but it was impossible for him to have none at all. Despite the distance between them Hannibal could sense the want he left in his wake, the desire he sparked brimming over in the people who noticed him. He paused when he reached the corner of the street, looking up at the top of the building with a smirk.

Hannibal stepped off the ledge, wings unfurling as he took his leave. He wasn't supposed to be there anyway.

*

Will starred up at the building that locals still called Legg Mason, despite the name changing several years earlier. A young woman had stopped to watch him and he kept tabs on her out of the corner of his eye - he didn't want her getting too close - but most of his attention was focused on the angel standing on top of the building.

He'd felt the angel's watchful gaze as he walked along the street navigating the morning rush. He wasn't sure why it was watching him. There was no reason for Heaven to send anyone to keep tabs on him. Sure, he caused a few problems here and there, but nothing worth sending out the calvary. He wasn't bartering for souls and there was no celestial war raging.

Well - none he was aware of. And he was fairly certain he would still be aware, despite how long he'd been residing on and walking the earth.

It was more years than he cared to remember and more still stretching out in front of him, on and on through infinity. He saw the future and the future was boring.

The girl who had stopped began to approach him. He would have to acknowledge her soon, but he wanted to know why he was being watched.

It must not have been a sanctioned surveillance because the angel stepped back from the ledge and took off, headed back to join the heavenly host. Will knew they didn't *actually* carry harps and sing in the clouds - though in truth he didn't know what angels did in their spare time, if they had any - but it was enjoyable to imagine it.

He smiled broadly, turning the full wattage of it on the girl approaching him. He should really discourage her and send her packing. But he was bored and lonely and she was rather attractive. And what was wrong with having a little fun?

*

Hannibal was back on top of the Transamerica Tower when he saw the demon again. He was walking more slowly this time, glancing up now and again and smiling. He clearly knew he was being watched and didn't mind. Hannibal crouched first, debating, and then seated himself, allowing his legs to hang from the side of the building.

"What are you doing, Hannibal?" The voice appeared next to him, followed by the form of petite brunette with a soft face at odds with the firm line of her mouth and the determined look in her eyes.

"Alana," he said in greeting.

"You didn't answer my question," she commented after several minutes of silence.

Hannibal shrugged. "Observing." The demon had stopped at the corner of the street again and was looking up. Hannibal had flown away last time the demon had reached this corner. He wondered if the demon would head East or West on Lombard Street. He wondered where he was heading.

"That demon doesn't require observation."

"No. Have they sent you to collect me?"

"No." Alana pursed her lips. "Why are you watching him?"

"Curiosity." Hannibal turned to look at her directly. "You were curious, once, if I recall."

She scowled at him. It was no secret that she had fallen for a human. It was supposed to be a secret that she was still with that human. Hannibal smiled at her, a look that was not entirely gentle.

"How is Margot?" he asked.

"Be careful, Hannibal," she said and was gone, as swiftly as the wind. Hannibal looked down at the street once more. The demon had disappeared. He sighed, unfurling his wings. He was about to push himself from the ledge when he heard a voice from behind him.

"Leaving so soon?" He turned, meeting sharp blue eyes - not what he expected from a demon. Hannibal swallowed. It was no wonder humans were so easily swayed by his kind. From a distance he'd been attractive. Up close he was positively stunning.

*

Will watched as the other angel appeared and then disappeared. He was curious about the angel remaining, who had appeared twice now, watching him both times. Will wasn't sure

about the angel's goals or motivations. He'd been careful to do nothing that would gain him the attention of either Heaven or Hell. Well, not any *serious* attention, anyway.

He strongly preferred the middle ground of earth.

Granted he often didn't have a great deal of interest in the trials and tribulations of the human race. In fact, he often found humans tedious. But it was better than being in the middle of celestial politics. Plus, being in human form allowed for certain pleasures he could not experience as a demon. It was way to alleviate the boredom of immortality.

The truth was he'd come to think of the human form he saw in the mirror as the truest expression of himself.

But there was a sense he got from the angel watching him - something he couldn't quite define but wanted to. So when the second angel disappeared and his angel appeared set to leave he did something he hadn't done in several decades. The movement might gain him some attention, but probably not too much. Besides, it was rather gratifying to take in the angel's genuine surprise when he realized who - or perhaps what - was standing behind him.

Will's lips curved into a smile. The pleasure he felt at the angel's reaction was a feeling he hadn't experienced in longer than he cared to remember.

"Why are you watching me?" Will asked.

The angel stared, licking his lips and saying nothing. Will considered the reaction. It seemed somehow incongruous for an angel to lick its lips; a nervous tic that was all too human.

"Ok," he said. "Maybe we should start with introductions. I'm Will." He extended his hand.

"Hannibal," the angel replied, taking his hand and shaking.

"Now," Will asked again. "Why are you watching me?"

Hannibal flushed. Until Will saw it with his own eyes he would not have thought it possible for an angel to blush. He smiled broadly.

"I see," he said. "Well, this day has already exceeded my expectations. Though they are admittedly low." He stepped closer to Hannibal, placing a hand on the angel's chest. "But I have a feeling it is about to get even more interesting."

Chapter End Notes

> This also feels like the start of something way longer. I was tempted to continue but it felt like I was at a good stopping point and I hope to come back to several of these ideas, so maybe this will be one of them.

# Monstrous Flora

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will considered the plant in front of them. It had a vague resemblance to some of the other bromeliads Hannibal had showed him: a tall bloom emerging from the middle of the plant with an array of delicate yellow flowers.

The primary difference was the spines.

Beyond that, it was the man impaled the spines.

“Did you do this?” Will asked.

Hannibal wasn’t a sloucher but somehow he still managed to stand up straighter in the face of Will’s question, making the most of their height difference. Will swallowed his laugh at the affronted look on Hannibal’s face, the other man’s disappointment at the question palpable.

He wasn’t entirely successful. The corners of his move twitched, giving him away. Hannibal caught his amusement, scowling in response. At that Will did laugh.

“You’re right, I should know you better,” Will said, voice teasing. “You wouldn’t waste the meat.”

“No.” The softening of Hannibal’s face would have been imperceptible to anyone else, but Will could see the fondness in his lover’s eyes as Hannibal turned to look at him. “However, this would be an excellent means of disposing of the parts we elect not to use.”

As always Hannibal’s tone was carefully neutral, but the unspoken words - that Will would not allow displays of the bodies - resonated. Will’s lips quirked again. Hannibal was no fool; he knew better than to showcase his kills while they were still supposed to be ‘laying low’, hoping the FBI would give up the search. They were both aware of the foolishness of any extravagant displays, but Will had been the one to speak the words and so Hannibal had taken to pouting childishly about what Will would not allow him to do.

Pouting was an oddly compelling look on the doctor, and Will suspected Hannibal only took to the behavior because of the way Will reacted to it. Will was already cataloguing the ways he could change that pout to an expression of pure ecstasy. And of course Hannibal knew that. He stared at Will with alarmingly innocent eyes and dilated pupils.

Will cleared his throat and took a step toward the plant.

“I wouldn’t,” Hannibal cautioned.

Will nodded, stilling. “How did this happen, anyway?”

“Usually it’s sheep,” Hannibal murmured. “This man was probably a vagrant, or drunk, and he simply wandered too close.”

“Could we transplant one?” Will asked.

“Doubtful. But we know they are here.”

“It’s a bit of a trek, though. It’d be more convenient to have one closer to the house.”

“Convenience is not always a blessing.” Hannibal smiled at Will fondly. “We wouldn’t want a body found too close to the house, even if it is being consumed by the flora.”

“I suppose,” Will said thoughtfully. He turned to leave, accidentally stepping closer to the plant as he did. The pain was sharp and sudden. Hannibal’s eyes widened and Will looked down to see a spike piercing his shoulder. His first instinct was to laugh. How had the plant managed to spear him?

Luckily Hannibal’s reflexes were as intact as ever, and he quickly gripped Will by the arms and pulled him forward harshly. It hurt. The spike moved back through his body again as Hannibal wrenched him closer, and Will could feel the need of the plant coursing through him.

*You already have a body*, he thought, loudly, hoping the plant would release him.

Hannibal wrapped strong arms around him, holding him tightly and backing away from the plant. Will rested his forehead on Hannibal’s shoulder, giving in to his urge to laugh. It was a chaotic he hardly recognized as his own.

A soothing hand ran down his back. “Step back and let me look at you,” Hannibal said. Will obliged. His shoulder was throbbing and he could feel the blood soaking into his shirt, warm and sticky. “Can you lift your arms?”

Will raised his arms in response, obliging each of Hannibal’s requests to test his range of motion. “At least it was my left shoulder this time,” he said. A soft sigh escaped Hannibal’s lips and Will looked at him in surprise.

“It’s not bad,” Hannibal said. “Though perhaps a bit more caution next time.” He ran his hands down Will’s arms, squeezing his forearms gently. Will looked over his shoulder. He thought he could see blood dripping from the spike that pierced him. He shivered.

“I still want one,” he said. Hannibal laughed then and Will moved closer, pressing against his chest to feel the tremor of it. Hannibal’s hand moved to his hair, giving it a gentle tug.

“Despite its dangers?”

“I like dangerous things,” Will said, pointedly. Hannibal said nothing, instead kissing the crown of Will’s head and pulling him close.

Chapter End Notes

The plant is based on a real plant, *Puya Chilensis*, which is native to Chile and referred to as the "sheep eating plant". The plant traps animals with thick fur and the animal starves to death and then decomposes, providing the plant with fertilizer.

Even though it doesn't go after people, it's kind of disturbing a plant like that actually exists . . .

It was my goal to do all of these in May, but obviously that's not happening. Still, I suppose the point is to do them, not to be super strict about the timeline.

# The Monster in History

Chapter Notes

very brief reference to the murder of a child in this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The barn was unassuming. It was early twentieth century, made of solid but aging wood. It hadn't been cared for as well as it should have been and Will could see some woodpecker damage near the roof and several places where the boards had rotted and were in need of replacement. There was a star painted above the door, the paint once red but fading with time.

It reminded him of the barn where he met the Angelmaker. The inside of this one wasn't much better: a man and a woman, the man kneeling in supplication but the woman looking skyward, arms bound behind her. Both their hearts were missing. Love unrequited or gone wrong: two of the oldest stories in the book.

What made the scene a but more unusual is that they had both been drained of blood. What made the scene truly horrific was the child. It was between them, appearing uninjured except for the puncture marks on its shoulder. It had also been drained.

Jack had released him but had clearly forgotten they'd carpooled. So Will stood on the outskirts of the field, staring back at the barn, waiting. Seeing children was never easy - it caused a special kind of ache and tension He expected to soother that ache with whiskey and nightmares later, but instead he felt it leaving him when a solid presence appeared at his side - slightly behind him and to his right but irrevocably, undeniably *there.*

"Do you know what the seven pointed star on the barn means?" Hannibal asked.

"Does it matter?" Will asked, gruffly.

As usual Hannibal didn't respond to the jab. "It was to keep the snallygaster away."

Will stuffed his hands in his pockets and scowled at the other man, grateful for the distraction of his irritation.

"Should I know what that is?" Will asked, eyebrows raised.

"It's a legend specific to the area. Stories of the creature are common around the turn of the century." Hannibal continued to stare at the barn, either oblivious to or intentionally ignoring Will's expression.

Will strongly suspected it was the later.

When Hannibal did turn to face him it was with a small smile. "Though most often thought to snatch its prey in the night and carry it away, some earlier accounts include it draining the blood of its victims."

"Baltimore's own version of a vampire," Will said. "Great."

Hannibal's smile barely widened but it was clear he sensed Will's interest.

"Not exactly," Hannibal continued. "The snallygaster was described as a cross between a reptile and a bird. Sometimes with tentacles."

Will stared. "You have to be making this up."

"While the creature itself is a fabrication, I assure you the legend itself is not."

"How do you know about it?"

"I endeavored to immerse myself in the culture when I settled here."

Will chuckled softly. "And you learned about the local monsters."

Hannibal inclined his head. "Stories of monsters are intriguing to me. They are an effort to explain that which we do not wish to face."

"It's easier to assume a monster perpetrated a crime," Will spat. "Provides clarity of thought."

Hannibal clearly noted the acidity in Will's tone but once again choose not to react to or acknowledge it. Will huffed in irritation.

"The victims were drained," he said. "It could be a reference to the legend."

"Yes," Hannibal conceded. "Though the star was meant as protection, to keep the monster out."

"Nothing can truly keep a monster out." Will's voice was soft. Thoughtful.

"Let's leave, shall we?" Hannibal said, his hand reaching out to hover over the small of Will's back. The heat of it behind him was frustrating, but Will couldn't decide if it was because he wanted the weight of it there or because he wanted it gone. "You'll think better after a good night's sleep."

Will shook his head. "I came with Jack."

"Allow me to drive you, Will." The hand that had been hovering finally made contact, answering Will's question of whether he wanted it there or not. He nodded vaguely and allowed himself to be led away.

"Snallygaster," he muttered, sneezing rather than seeing Hannibal's smile.

He would have to bring it up to Jack in the morning.

Chapter End Notes

The snallygaster is real. Well - a real legend. And it was described the way Hannibal describes it here. It's a creature specific to Maryland and later the DC area.

# The Hybrid

Hannibal stood in the lab, quietly watching the containment area. A pair of blue eyes blinked back at him owlishly. The creature was silent, considering. It unfurled its wings and Hannibal watched, mesmerized, as it stretched its wings behind while its arms reached high above it, slender torso curving backward. Hannibal's eyes trailed down over the creature's soft manhood, thick thighs and well-defined calves.

When he looked back up the creature had tilted its head, regarding him curiously. It smiled, raising a hand to brush soft, chocolate curls from its forehead. Since it had matured it had refused to allow its hair to be cut.

Aside from the wings it appeared human - which it was.

Primarily.

Hannibal smiled back, feeling a tug of appreciation in his chest for the beautifully crafted being in front of him. Ever since the vampiric creatures appeared in their first city, it had been his project - his and his team's - to create a hybrid. The stated goal of project Chimera was to figure out a way to communicate with the monsters.

But Hannibal knew better.

The goal of Project Chimera was to create a being superior to either race. Before him was that being.

"Will," Hannibal said softly. The creature licked its lips in response, moving closer to the clear barrier that separated them. They were still working on speech.

"Ha," the creature croaked.

Hannibal tapped his chest. "Hannibal," he said. The creature blinked those owlish eyes at him once more before turning and stalking to the bed in the corner. It looked over its shoulder and blinked in a way that was almost coquettish before laying down on the bed. It folded its arms behind its head, looking up at the ceiling.

"Will," Hannibal called. In response the creature raised a hand and waved before returning to its previous position. It was done for the the day; there was no sense in staying longer. Hannibal turned down the lights before leaving. The creature was largely alone at night, which it seemed to prefer, though a few staff members stayed to monitor its health and well-being.

And make sure it didn't escape.

Though Hannibal didn't like to consider that possibility too closely.

*

The creature was huddled in the corner when Hannibal arrived the following morning. Curled into a ball, it rocked back and forth, pulling at its hair.

“What happened?” Hannibal asked. Jimmy and Brian shook their heads.

“We don’t know,” Jimmy said.

“He started screaming something an hour ago,” Brian said.

“It was like he was having a nightmare,” Jimmy nodded, agreeing.

“Why didn’t you call me?” Hannibal asked.

They shrugged in tandem. “He settled down,” Jimmy said. “We figured we’d tell you when you got here.”

“Then, about ten minutes ago,” Brian gestured at the containment area.

Hannibal sighed, walking to the barrier. He watched the creature for a moment. It had stopped pulling its hair but continued to rock.

It was the wail that did it. It was an eerie sound, a note off from human, but filled with pain and sadness.

“Open it,” Hannibal ordered. He didn’t need to look behind him to see the shock on their faces. The hesitation was brief and then one of them - Hannibal thought it was probably Brian, but he could have been wrong - entered the combination to open the containment area.

The creature stilled at the sound of the door opening, but didn’t turn or otherwise acknowledge the change. Instead it seemed to curl further in on itself, its wings unfurling and curling around its knees.

“Will,” Hannibal said gently, approaching the creature. It was dangerous to be there but he felt only exhilaration. He had not been this close to the creature in several months. At least, not without it being restrained. He approached slowly, crouching down as he got closer but keeping what he hoped was a safe distance.

The creature lifted its head, blue eyes peeking over the edge of its wing.

It was an impressive sight up close: thin membrane stretched over cartilage that resembled ribs. But the structure was unique. The creature could tuck the appendages against its back, compacting them a surprising amount considering how large they were. He traced the slender veins visible through the diaphanous skin with his eyes; purple lines mottling the pale expanse.

“Can you tell me what’s upsetting you?” Hannibal asked, his voice soft.

“Bad,” the creature said. Hannibal sat up straighter in surprise. The creature had been vocalizing some but had not formed any words.

Until now.

“Bad?” Hannibal asked.

The creature nodded, then lifted a hand, putting a finger on its forehead.

“Bad.” It repeated, dropping its head back below its wing so that Hannibal could only see the top of its hair.

“What’s bad, Will?” Hannibal asked. The creatures eyes appear again, wide and luminous.

“Will,” it repeated. It sounded thoughtful. Its wings retracted, gracefully pulling back and folding against its back. It smiled. “Will.”

Hannibal nodded. He tapped himself on the chest again. “Hannibal.”

The creature reached out as if to touch, but Hannibal had seated himself too far away. It moved suddenly and with decidedly inhuman speed. One moment it was seated a foot away and the next moment it was kneeling in front of him, hand on his chest.

Hannibal turned to look behind him. “Don’t,” he said quietly to Jimmy and Brian, knowing they were poised to raise the alarm.

“Han-i-bal,” the creature said, elongating each syllable. “Hannibal.” It parted its lips in a smile, revealing fangs, before suddenly sitting back, removing its hand from Hannibal’s chest. “Bad.”

“Why?” Hannibal asked. He reached out and took the creatures hand. The creature looked at him in what appeared to be surprise, before looking down at their joined hands. The tip of its tongue appeared between its lips as it looked at Hannibal and blinked owlishly once more.

“Will,” it said, pressing its free hand to its chest.

Hannibal nodded. “Yes, Will. That’s what we call you. That’s your name.”

Will tilted his head and placed his free hand on Hannibal’s chest. “Hannibal.”

“Yes.” Hannibal was ecstatic. The creature smiled at him before suddenly pulling back, unfurling its wings and backing into the corner.

“Bad,” it said again. “Bad, bad, BAD.” It rushed at Hannibal, hitting him hard in the chest. He flew against the barrier, hitting the door so hard he saw stars. He groaned as he felt the door open behind him. It wasn’t fast enough. Will was on him, pinning him to the floor. He heard indistinct screaming from outside the containment area.

“Why are you bad?” Hannibal formed the question with difficulty.

Will leaned closer, inhaling deeply as he ran his nose up the side of Hannibal’s neck. “Will wants,” the creature said. It breathed in deeply again. “Hannibal good.”

Fangs pierced the skin at the base of Hannibal's neck.  Will's wings unfurled, covering them both as he drank.  It was an odd feeling but not an unpleasant one.  Hannibal felt no urge to struggle, instead sinking into the gentle pull of sleep.

The last thing he remembered was the taste of salt and copper on his tongue.

# Kept Captive

He woke to darkness, dank air and a pounding at the back of his skull. For several moments he lay quietly, taking stock of his surroundings. The ground was cool and slightly damp. That and the stale scent of the air made it clear he was underground. The quiet was eerie and his heartbeat louder than normal - though no faster, he noted with some pleasure.

It was a matter of pride that he retained control over his body, regardless of his predicament.

Though clearly he had been overpowered to end up wherever he currently was.

He pushed the though aside. It wasn't the first time. It likely wouldn't be the last. But Hannibal always found a way to gain the upper hand, and he had no doubt he would again. He flexed his toes, noting he was barefoot. Last he remembered he had been wearing shoes; whoever had taken him had removed them.

A wise choice. It made it harder to run, though far from impossible.

He shifted his shoulders, groaning involuntarily. His arms were stretched above his head. He didn't think they were bound, but they were numb from being in that position for a prolonged period of time. He did his best to move and bring blood-flow back to them, hissing softly at the pain of the muscles reawakening before locking that ache in a room in his mind and firmly shutting the door.

The pain was minimal compared to what he'd experienced in the past and quite easy to block out.

Rolling onto his right side he shifted himself into a sitting position, feeling the strain on his joints without acknowledging the pain. *Nothing serious*, he said to himself.

All in all he was surprisingly intact.

His eyes had slowly been growing accustomed to the low light. He'd thought he was in a cave, and perhaps part of the structure had occurred naturally, but the sharp corners made it clear it was primarily man made. A bunker of some sort. Doorless, windowless - but there had to be an entrance somewhere.

As he moved to stand he heard a sound. It was the tiniest shift in movement, something he could easily have missed or dismissed s an echo of his own movement or as something imagined in the dark.

He knew it was neither. "Who's there?" he asked. Though he'd spoken quietly, his voice seemed to fill the space around him. He heard rustling again, louder, this time, and a scrawny figure approached him in the dark.

It was difficult to gauge the age of the man in front of him. He was dirty, his hair matted to his skull. It appeared to be dark in color, but between the dirt and low light it was difficult to

tell. His eyes flitted over Hannibal. There was a nervous energy radiating from him, almost as though the air surrounding him was trembling as he held himself still for Hannibal to inspect.

"How long have you been here?" Hannibal asked. The man only shrugged in response, making no move to speak or otherwise respond. He stared at Hannibal's chest, breathing silently, not moving.

It was no wonder Hannibal hadn't initially realized he was there. This was a practiced stillness; the quiet of a man who had become accustomed to being prey and had adapted to hide in the shadows. He'd been there for some time, then. Though that did not necessarily bode well for Hannibal, he was a man of superior intellect and strength. As he looked at the figure in front of him he remained confident he could find a way out.

"Do you speak?"

The man stared at him for a moment, eyes focused unblinkingly on Hannibal's chin. He gave the slightest shake of a head, but it seemed hesitant.

"Are you *able* to speak?" Hannibal rephrased.

"Yes," the other man said. It was more of a groan than anything, suggesting his voice had not been recently used.

"You've been alone for a while."

The man nodded. "Long time." He paused, as though he were gathering breath or energy to speak. Or perhaps both. "I'm Will." He didn't extend a hand to shake.

"Hannibal."

Will nodded quickly before sinking to the ground. Hannibal mirrored him, sitting cross-legged on the floor and watching the other man with interest. The longer Hannibal looked the younger he seemed. He was pale and entirely too thin, but his build suggested he had once been muscular - if still slender.

"Do you have any idea how long you've been here?" Hannibal asked again, gentling his voice.

Will shrugged. "Months. Year maybe. Kept track but got confused." He gestured toward the shadow behind him.

"Do you know who's keeping us here, Will?"

Will looked up sharply. The eye contact was brief, but Hannibal felt a jolt of electricity run down his spine and he shuddered involuntarily. Will's eyes were blue, he realized in the split second before they shifted away. Will looked at his lap.

"What," he said.

He didn't phrase it as a question, but Hannibal began to repeat himself anyway.

"No," Will stopped him. "Not who. What. A monster. A dragon." He looked away, into the shadows. "He didn't clean me last time. I didn't want to meet you dirty."

Hannibal felt an odd warmth in his chest when he considered the vulnerability of Will's words. "It's ok," he said soothingly.

Will shrugged. He traced a pattern in the dirt between them. "I wanted to go home," he said. "I didn't have friends but I had dogs." There was a long pause before he spoke again, wistfully. "They're probably gone by now."

Hannibal longed to reach out and take Will's hand but he refrained, honoring the distance between them. He watched as Will continued to trail his finger through the dirt, slowly realizing the meaning of the young man's earlier statement.

"He'll be back to bathe you?" Hannibal asked, leaning forward.

"Yes," Will said slowly, his eyes once again rising to Hannibal's. His smile was all the more dazzling for its brevity. Hannibal thought he caught a hint of mischievousness in the other man's expression. He smiled. He was resolved: he was going to escape, and when he did Will was coming with him.

# The Human is the Monster

He watched as she paced the cage. The four of them had been having an argument when the monster made a howling sound. Hannibal had paused first, looking over to see what was happening. She made some other noises - it was a language, Will thought, though they couldn't understand it - and Hannibal strode over to the cage, attempting to sooth her.

Her eyes widened as he neared. Will felt almost bad for her - she seemed so afraid.

He reminded himself that her father hadn't been afraid. He'd come after Hannibal with the intent to kill. Will shuddered to consider what would have happened if he hadn't been there, backing Hannibal up while on patrol.

Behind him Alana and Jack were still arguing. Their voices rose and fell in a kind of melody; Alana's higher notes increasing in speed and volume as Jack's lower notes followed.

Will had stopped listening to the words. "What do you think she's saying?" He asked Hannibal. He took a moment to admire the other man in profile, smiling softly, before Hannibal turned to face him. He knew Hannibal gave him the extra time to look, indulging him. They'd only been together a few months: everything was still new, but Will didn't think he'd ever tire of admiring his handsome partner.

Hannibal didn't respond, instead twisting to watch Jack and Alana. Alana was a vision when she was angry, her eyes darkening, her hair flowing, her presence rising above her diminutive stature. The robes she wore were blue, bringing out her eyes. Jack wore red, a color Will didn't see him in often. He looked powerful in it. Their colors seemed to swirl together as they gestured, both making exaggerated motions with their arms.

"She doesn't deserve to die, Jack," Alana's voice was harsh and Will jolted suddenly, unaware of the content of the argument until that moment.

"I agree," Hannibal said calmly. "This is a rare opportunity for study."

Will scooted closer to Hannibal until they were standing shoulder to shoulder. He felt as though he were absorbing his partners heat and strength.

"We've never kept one alive," Will pointed out. "And she's young. And look Jack," he gestured to the cage where the girl was cowering. She must recognize that they were discussing her, although she didn't appear to understand their language any better than they did hers. "She's terrified."

Jack scowled. "We can't afford the risk. When they arrived on our shores they razed entire cities."

"She didn't," Alana said. The girl let out a plaintive wail, making noises once again. Will thought she was pleading with them. Everyone stopped for a moment, turning to look at her.

“If we don’t agree, we leave it to the council to decide her fate,” Hannibal said. Will nodded. He felt Hannibal’s tail curl around him, pulling him closer still.

“Margot will side with you,” Jack said, angry.

“Bella will side with you,” Alana spat back. They glared at each other, neither backing down, until Jack’s mouth curled into a grin.

“Don’t be so sure.” He said, his rumbling laugh warming the room.

Alana’s mouth quirked in response. “Don’t be so sure about Margot, either.”

Jack sighed. “She is young,” he conceded. “Perhaps we should keep her.”

“Studying her would help us learn more about them, Jack,” Will said. He pressed closer to Hannibal, earning a soft nuzzle.

“Then our recommendation to council will be containment and study,” Alana said. She looked slowly around the room, holding eye contact with each of them in turn. “Are we all agreed?”

They murmured their assent. Alana walked to the cage, tail swishing. The point of it crept up behind her, perching on her right shoulder. Will recognized it as something she did when she was nervous but determined.

“Ok, *human,”* she said, the word the monsters called themselves sounding strange coming from her mouth. The girl unfolded herself at the word, looking at Alana with what Will thought must be curiosity.

Alana tapped her chest. “Alana,” she said.

The girl in the cage tapped herself in return. “Abigail.”

# The Dragon

Deep in the heart of the mountain was the dragon's lair.

It was a lair like any other. Wide rooms, piles of gold, the scattered, half burnt remains of the foolish knights who'd attempted to take that gold. Occasionally one of the villages would offer him a sacrifice in the form of a maiden. Hannibal dutifully emerged to collect them. In his youth he'd devoured them, but as he aged he grew tired of the flavor. He didn't need to eat maidens and they were largely bland and tasteless, not having seen much of life to lend them any flavor. Instead he sent them out the back of the cave with a small pile of gold, on to a new life.

He strode into the largest of the caverns, huffing great wisps of smoke as he went.

"Hannibal?" called a voice. He huffed. Abigail, the most recent virginal sacrifice. He'd tried to send her out the back like all the others, but she'd refused to leave. She lay reclined on a chaise, reading from one of the many books Hannibal had confiscated or been given in tribute over is centuries of life. He was no longer certain which was which.

Well - actually that wasn't true. Hannibal had an excellent memory and could have recalled the exact moment he'd obtained the book she was reading. He simply couldn't be bothered to do so.

"You're depressed," she told him. He glared at her. She'd been saying the same thing to him since the day she'd arrived and he'd attempted to usher her out.

She closed her book. "Admit it, Hannibal," she continued. "You're lonely. You wander from room to room, day in and day out, never getting any enjoyment out of your hoard."

Hannibal spit a small ball of fire at her feet before morphing into the form of a man. It was difficult to carry on a conversation with a human in his natural state. As usual, he appeared before her naked and she rolled her eyes.

"Go put on a robe," she said, throwing herself back on the chaise and reopening her book.

Hannibal had to concede that perhaps he *was* depressed. Her behavior should have been far more irritating. Still. Who was he to take advice from a teenage girl? He was nearly 500 years old.

"I'm not depressed," he said. She rolled her eyes again. Pointedly avoiding looking at him until he wandered away to find a robe. "Better?" he asked, reemerging as he tied it tightly around his waist.

"Much," she said, though Hannibal found it rather hard to believe as she hadn't looked up from her book. He seated himself in an armchair. The cavern was astonishing vast when he was a man. They were so small and fragile, these humans.

“What number is that?” Hannibal asked.

“One hundred and five,” Abigail said. She’d been living with him for months, devoting the majority of her time to reading her way through the books scattered about his lair. She’d been collecting them in piles in this room, referring to it as his library. *No one allowed me to learn before*, she’d said when Hannibal asked her why.

Though not all the books were educational. Or perhaps it was more accurate to say they were a different type of education. She’d read one of them several times and Hannibal found it extremely interesting to watch her read certain passages: her eyes dilated, her breathing became shallower and her heart rate increased. One evening he’d heard her moaning, softly, the sweet scent of vanilla and honey drifting through the cavern as she pleasured herself in what she thought was privacy. He opted not to break that illusion.

He’d briefly considered offering to participate - he’d done so with a few of the other sacrifices before they left him and found it enjoyable - but found the thought surprisingly distasteful. She’d become more like a daughter to him and, while he might not have held the same prudish views as the villagers, there were lines one did not cross.

Besides, he had reluctantly come to admit he enjoyed her company. His lair felt a little less vast and lonely with her in it.

“Do you think another knight will be coming soon?” she asked, casually flicking her eyes to a suite of armor in the corner. She’d insisted he remove the corpse, saying she didn’t want it stinking up the room, but she’d never appeared particularly bothered with the fate of the knights otherwise.

There’d been three during the time she’d been with him, all of whom Hannibal had dispatched with ease. Really they were frightfully boring. He longed for a worthy adversary - someone he could at least admire before smiting.

“Perhaps,” Hannibal said, non-committal. They were sent fairly consistently so he was certain there would be - likely in the next week - but a part of him hoped he was wrong. He didn’t need the bother. He sighed. “I’m going to bed.” It was early, but he was tired.

Abigail looked up from her book, eyeing him over the pages. “You need to find a hobby,” she said.

“My hobby is eating insufferable maidens,” Hannibal retorted, shifting back to dragon form as he exited the cavern for his chambers, ending the conversation.

“Melodramatic, much?” he heard her mutter as he wandered down the halls.

Had he been human he might had smiled.

*

The knight was prompt, appearing a mere two days later.

“Come out, Dragon!” he yelled from the entrance to the cave, as if the demand could *actually* compel a dragon. Hannibal chuffed lightly, smoke curling delicately from his nostrils. Bored, he lumbered to the entrance - a cold, dank cave that was a far cry from his inner sanctum - to greet the knight.

He was immediately stuck by the sight that greeted him. The knight had removed his helmet and was sitting on the ledge, leaning back against the outside of the cave. An array of messy chocolate curls covered the top of his head, neck and forehead, despite him brushing the strands distractedly away from his face. He was eating a small piece of bread, chewing slowly as expressions Hannibal couldn’t place passed across his face.

He shifted, turning his body in response to Hannibal’s appearance at the entrance.

Gods, he was beautiful. Hannibal was struck immediately by the blue of his eyes. They mirrored the sky when he turned, before shifting to reflect the grey of the stone. But there was also the plushness of his lips, the strong line of his jaw with the slightest hint of a beard, dark lashes and a gentle nose.

“Ah, Dragon,” he said, sounding bored.

Hannibal huffed an affirmative, releasing small tendrils of smoke from his nostrils. The knight watched him without standing. Instead, he continued to chew his bread slowly.

He lifted it to Hannibal. “I hope you don’t mind. I’d prefer to die having had a last meal.” His tone shifted, becoming more acerbic - a refreshing change from the previous knights Hannibal had encountered. He watched the knight’s jaw as he chewed. Its firm, continuous motion was mesmerizing.

“Not much of a last meal,” Hannibal said slowly. Forming words in dragon form was difficult, the movements of his tongue a foreign sensation. The mouth of a dragon was not intended for speech.

The knight looked surprised. “You can speak.”

Hannibal inclined his head. The knight took another bite of bread, chewing thoughtfully. He swallowed and stood, unsheathing his sword with no great enthusiasm.

“I’ve finished my bread, so I suppose we should fight.” His tone reenforced a general lack of enthusiasm. Hannibal made a rumbling noise and a glimmer of fear passed over the knight’s face followed quickly by realization. “Oh. You’re laughing.”

The knight rested the point of his sword on the ground, leaning on it like a cane. He watched Hannibal with slightly narrowed eyes, making no move to lift the sword or approach - but neither did he back away. Watching him in turn, Hannibal made an impulsive decision. He shifted.

The knight took several steps backward, gripping his sword tightly. An odd reaction, Hannibal thought, given his current form should have been less frightening, not more.

“I’ve startled you,” he said, the words coming easier. The knight said nothing, swallowing with what appeared to be some difficulty.

“Can all dragons do that?” the knight asked.

Hannibal shook his head. “There were once several of us who could. I believe I am the only one left.”

“Do you fight all the knights like this?” he waved his hand in a circle front of him, indicating Hannibal’s altered form.

“I fight as a dragon,” Hannibal said. “I changed to speak with you. Speech in dragon from is difficult.”

“Oh.”

“What’s your name?”

“Oh. Uh - Will.” The knight shifted awkwardly. “Pleased to meet you, I suppose.”

“Will. You may call me Hannibal.”

“Ok.” Will was staring at him, clearly uncertain how to proceed. He lifted his sword. “I suppose we should get to the fighting?”

Hannibal laughed. “Do you wish to fight me, Will?”

Will lowered his sword once more. He shrugged, a difficult motion in the armor he was wearing. “Not particularly, if I’m being honest. But that’s why I was sent here.”

“To fight me and to steal my treasure.”

“That’s what the village elders hope.”

Hannibal cocked his head. “And you?”

“I expect you’ll kill me.”

Will didn’t seem particularly concerned about that possibility and Hannibal felt a sudden rush of emotion for the young man in front of him. He couldn’t place the feeling - human emotions were so much more complicated than anything he felt as a dragon - but it made him feel cold and then warm inside.

“Perhaps we can leave the fighting and killing until tomorrow,” Hannibal suggested. “In the meantime, I invite you to join Abigail and I for a much finer last meal than the bread you attempted so valiantly to savor.”

Will’s stomach rumbled in response but he remained still and watchful. “Abigail - is she another dragon?”

“No,” Hannibal said kindly. “She is human. A sacrifice made to me.”

“And you kept her? I thought you ate sacrifices.”

“I grew bored with the flavor.”

Will laughed merrily, a lilting musical sound that Hannibal decided he liked quite a bit. He was tempted to clarify that he had not been joking, but something in Will’s eyes told him the knight knew and was amused by the truth of the statement.

That was refreshing. Perhaps Hannibal could convince him to stay.

“Very well then,” Will said, sheathing his sword. “What have I got to lose?”

# The Monster Dies

Chapter Notes

> On the off-chance Moondust_Yikisoul is reading this: thank you for your lovely comment on ch 1 which I deleted by mistake . . . (don't ask, I'm facepalming). I tried to get it back but I guess you can't undo that.
>
> Still, I read it and appreciate it.

Death: The Great Equalizer.

Will rather likes the sound of that.

Death, after all, comes for all alike.

Some escape his grasp for longer than others. Some he reaches for and they slide through his fingers, murky souls slipping back into their bodies and refusing to leave.

But they cannot refuse forever.

Death is patient. Death is quiet.

Some assume he is loud or violent - Will is amused by these people. The violence, the *anger* of death is something human. The circumstances may be ugly, but the moment itself is a soft exhalation; a moment of gentle release. For those in pain it is a relief. For those who are weary it is rest. For those who are hopeless it is renewal. Even for those who are pleased, happy or calm it is a transition, fought against until the moment it overcomes them and then welcomed like a long lost love at the moment it occurs.

Will sees the beauty of it each time.

But then it is hard not to see the beauty in death when you *are* Death.

When he began he thought he would grow tired of the constancy of it, the never ending procession of souls moving from one world to the next. He has not. He travels the world, taking souls, enraptured with the knowledge that all will meet him eventually: young, old, kind, selfish, pious sinners, righteous liars, lovers, haters, givers of life, takers of life - monsters.

There is one in particular Will watches when he can, fascinated by the way he leads his prey to the moment of their death, delivering their souls into Will’s waiting arms.

Hannibal Lecter is only a monstrous man, not a mythic monster of old. Will collected the last of their souls many centuries ago; there are none left in the world of men. And yet - Hannibal *is* a monster. A brutal, elegant monster. His blows are precise, his cuts exacting. He guides his muses in their journey to death with oddly delicate hands.

Will is entranced.

Hannibal isn't aware he is being watched. He isn't aware that Will is counting the moments until his death - even a monster eventually dies, and Hannibal's day is coming more quickly than he believes.

He isn't aware of Will's plans for his soul.

Though sometimes Will wonders at Hannibal's perceptiveness. He has an uncanny ability to escape difficult circumstances, deflect blame, and generally - Will laughs to himself at the turn of phrase - get away with murder.

Will often watches as he displays the bodies. He is an artist whose favorite mediums are blood, skin, bone and viscera. A few times Hannibal has turned to look, his gaze alighting directly on Will, and Will is struck by the odd sensation that Hannibal *sees* him. He sucks in his breath - well, strictly speaking Death doesn't breath, but he imagines the feeling is similar - and waits for the man to speak.

He never does. Each time his eyes drift away and Will feels the cold absence of the monster's regard.

But Death is patient. Will waits. Soon, Hannibal will die.

And when the monster dies, Will will be waiting.

# The Hive Mind

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stared resolutely out the window. There wasn't much to see, but he wasn't in the mood for conversation. Hannibal had tried, for a while, and then wisely quit attempting to solicit any about an hour back.

Will shifted his eyes from the window to the headrest in front of him, boring a hole into the back of Jack's sleeping head. In truth he might have spoken to Hannibal had it not been the three of them in the car, but he was angry with Jack for calling him out of the classroom yet again and he had spent the better part of the four hour car ride stoking the flames of his ire.

Not to mention the plane ride that came before the car ride.

The portion he'd been awake for anyway. The portion of the trip he had not spent drooling embarrassingly on Hannibal's shoulder. He scowled and looked back out the window.

"Nothing but corn," he murmured. Hannibal made a soft sound - not quite a laugh, but almost - from the driver's seat and Will's gaze shifted back just long enough to meet the other man's eyes in the rear view mirror. He could only see Hannibal's eyes and forehead but from the crinkling around his eyes he could tell the doctor was amused. Will resumed looking out the window, feeling as though something had shifted. He felt better. Lighter.

"Thank you for driving," he murmured, belatedly attempting politeness.

"It's my pleasure," Hannibal said, a statement that was dubious at best. "Jack is clearly exhausted" - as if on cue Jack snored, causing Will to smile involuntarily - "as are you. It was good that you got some rest."

Will crossed his arms and settled into the corner of the backseat. He supposed it was the hallmark of a good psychiatrist: highlight the discomfort so it can be confronted and soothed. Will had always found it to be similar to picking away a scab for the satisfaction of watching blood seep from the wound beneath once more. There was joy for the person picking at the dried blood and skin, but no healing.

Still, of all the things he could possibly endure examining falling asleep on the shoulder of a friend - well, he hoped they were friends - was minor. He sighed to himself, willing the tension in his shoulders to fall away. Pressing himself further into the corner he rested the side of his head against the cool glass of the window, closing his eyes.

He opened them again to a tapping sound. Jack was standing outside the window. Will was pleased to see the man looked a bit worse for wear.

"Hannibal's checking us in," Jack explained. "We'll visit the scene tomorrow and you can do your thing."

“I would have thought you’d want me there tonight, doing my thing,” Will said, exhaustion stealing the statement’s caustic edge.

Jack said nothing, the expression on his face telling Will everything he needed to know: had it been Jack’s decision they would already have been there.

The door opened and Hannibal exited the lobby. Will wondered if the doctor had been responsible for the delay or if it had been local law enforcement. He wasn’t sure whether or not to appreciate it. He *was* tired, but he also would have preferred to get it over with.

Hannibal had an odd expression on his face as he approached them - made odder still by his normal lack of expression. Or at least, lack of a readable expression. Will smiled to himself. The more time he spent with Hannibal the more he realized the doctor’s constantly neutral expression was anything but. He was getting better at reading the minutia of Hannibal’s emotions.

But the doctor was making no effort to mask an expression of confusion and concern as he approached them.

“Everything ok?” Will asked, softer than he intended. Hannibal nodded, following it with a subtle shake of his head in Will’s direction a moment later. Will pursed his lips. Jack looked between them, but made no comment. Instead he took the proffered key card from Hannibal tiredly and shouldered his bag, calling “I’ll see you in the morning” gruffly over his shoulder as he walked away.

Will didn’t move immediately, watching Hannibal as he removed first Will’s bag and then his own from the trunk of the car. Will took his suitcase from Hannibal’s hands with an intentionally questioning look. Hannibal merely shook his head once again.

“I don’t have your empathy Will,” he said, sounding strangely tired, “but there is something odd here. Something I can’t explain. A gut feeling, if you will.” The smile that followed the statement surprised Will by appearing nervous and vulnerable.

“Some would argue my livelihood relies on gut feelings,” Will commented. He kept his voice light, although he felt off-balance at the idea that Hannibal was nervous about anything. He was always so calm and collected.

“You wouldn’t,” Hannibal stated simply.

“No,” Will said, shouldering his bag as Hannibal extended the handle on his small roller. The other man appeared relaxed once more; whatever had unsettled him forgotten.

“We’re the opposite direction as Jack,” Hannibal said, gesturing to the other side of the u-shaped motel. He passed Will a keycard.

Will wondered if Hannibal had arranged that purposefully and found he couldn’t quite resist asking. The slightest upturn of the doctor’s lips was the only response and Will chuckled softly.

The pleasure Will felt at realizing their rooms were not only next to each other but *adjoining* took him by surprise and he pushed the feeling away to examine later. They'd already said goodnight, but Will unlocked the internal door in his room and knocked lightly on Hannibal's anyway.

Hannibal opened it almost immediately, looking at him curiously.

Will fidgeted. He'd wanted to say something to Hannibal about gut feelings, and how understanding of a crime scene often came to him before he understood why. He wasn't sure he could explain the motivation, except that seeing Hannibal even remotely unsettled about anything was so unusual he had the sudden, irrepressible urge to soothe. But when faced with the man himself, looking as put together as ever, Will faltered.

Hannibal was looking at him questioningly, a patient half-smile on his face.

"Uh, good night," Will said finally.

"Good night, Will."

Will stepped back, closing the door and locking it. He showered and changed quickly, feeling foolish. But before heading for the bed, he unlocked and opened the door in his room once more, pressing an ear to the door in Hannibal's room. He wondered if the other man was already asleep. He didn't hear any movement on the other side of the door, though a soft light came from beneath.

Maybe Hannibal slept with a light on. Will smiled. It was possible - and much more likely - that Hannibal had simply fallen asleep with a light on and hadn't intended to leave it on at all. But the idea that the other might have *intentionally* left a light on was strangely gratifying: a secret vulnerability shared between friends.

On impulse Will left the door not simply unlocked but cracked open and made his way to the bed. As he lifted the covers he noticed a candy bar on the pillow. It wasn't a brand he was familiar with. It appeared to be plain milk chocolate. He lifted it, flipping it over to look at the back of the wrapper. *Made in Evansville*.

It was a good way to promote the local candy makers, he supposed. Will set it on the nightstand and settled into bed, falling asleep almost instantly.

He didn't realized he'd left his light on.

*

He woke to the sound of light knocking, thinking at first that it was coming from the outer door before realizing Hannibal had opened the adjoining door in his room and was tapping on the slightly ajar door on Will's side of the wall.

Will sat up quickly, grateful Hannibal was polite enough to remain hidden behind the door. He took a quick stock of his appearance: he'd slept surprisingly well - no nightmares or night

sweats at all - and figured he was dressed enough.

“You can come in,” he said, voice still rough with sleep. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed, standing as Hannibal entered the room. Hannibal’s eyes roamed over him quickly, taking in his appearance. Will was tempted to scowl or make a cutting remark, but he refrained. As usual Hannibal’s attention felt appraising but not judgmental.

“Did you sleep well?” Hannibal asked, setting a french press on the tiny table in the room and fetching two glasses from Will’s bathroom.

“You brought your own coffee?” Will asked, incredulous, before adding under his breath. “Never mind, of course you did.”

“Unfortunately I was unable to pack any food for this trip, so we will have to make do with the motel’s breakfast. But we can at least have a good cup of coffee to start the day.”

Will blew gently across the top of the warm liquid, thinking Hannibal had likely started his day some time ago - he was already impeccably dressed. Will considered the other man as he sipped his coffee. He’d seen Hannibal looking more casual, but never disheveled. He wondered what Hannibal looked like when he woke up and found himself torn between the ridiculous vision of the man sleeping in a three piece suit, his appearance unchanging even in slumber, and an image of the doctor with mussed hair, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and stretching long limbs in the early morning light. Will wondered if he slept in pajamas, or maybe in his underwear. Or nude.

Will coughed.

“Jack will want to leave early,” he said, changing the direction of his thoughts.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered, a faint glimmer of amusement in his eyes that made Will feel annoyingly caught out. He sipped his coffee again to avoid a scowl. There was nothing to be ashamed of, he was merely *curious* about his friend’s habits. “In fact, Jack and I have already spoken this morning,” Hannibal continued, his tone turning almost apologetic. “It’s why I woke you.”

“Oh,” Will blinked.

“I believe he tried you first, but it would appear your phone has died.”

“Oh,” Will said again, standing and walking to the nightstand where he phone rested - dead. “I must have forgotten to plug it in.”

“No matter,” Hannibal said. “He expects us at breakfast in a few minutes.”

Will sighed, lifting his bag to rest on the bed and searching for clothes. Hannibal stood to leave. “Stay and finish your coffee,” Will said, retreating to the bathroom.

*

Jack was already seated, eating cereal and drinking coffee when Will and Hannibal arrived in the motel lobby. Will paused. There was something different about him, but he wasn't sure what it was.

"Will. Hannibal. Pleased you could join us." He looked tired. "Get some breakfast and we'll be on our way."

Will raised an eyebrow, glancing over at Hannibal who shrugged fractionally. Deciding not to question Jack's unhurried attitude he grabbed a prepackaged yogurt and some granola, watching Hannibal with amusement as the other man eyed the buffet with obvious disdain before also selecting a yogurt.

As they seated themselves Jack rubbed his temples. "What was that?" he asked.

Will shook his head. "Neither of us said anything, Jack." He glanced at Hannibal again.

"Are you feeling unwell, Jack?" Hannibal asked, meeting Will's eyes.

"Headache," Jack said. "I didn't sleep well. Probably the sugar."

"Sugar?" Hannibal prompted.

"The chocolate. Shouldn't have eaten it before bed," he explained gruffly. "We should go," he added, standing suddenly. "It's time."

Will looked at him, curiously. Jack looked like a tired version of himself, but Will couldn't shake the feeling there was something off.

"Lead the way, Jack," Hannibal said, though he was once again looking at Will.

The drive to the scene was quiet. The bodies had been found in the woods behind a high school, though Will was thankful they were adults and not high schoolers. The trio parked at the back of the high school's parking lot on the edge of the woods. Will wasn't surprised to see a local police cruiser in the parking spot next to theirs, nor was he surprised at the long trek into the woods.

What he *was* surprised about was the utter lack of anything that could be considered evidence of a crime when they reached the clearing. Except for the small fire pit, which Will supposed was technically not allowed on private land. But there was nothing else. Nothing was taped off, there were no evidence markers - nothing.

He felt a shudder run down his spine and he looked at Hannibal, who was also looking about curiously.

"You're certain this is it, Jack?" Hannibal asked. Jack nodded.

"Can I have the crime scene photos?" Will asked, wondering at the lack of local law enforcement. Maybe the cruiser had been there for another reason, but that seemed like too much of a coincidence.

“We don’t need them,” Jack said.

“*I* need them, Jack, if you expect me to reconstruct what happened here.”

“We know what happened here,” Jack said. He face was slack, his voice eerily calm. Will stared at him in confusion.

“Then why are we even here, Jack? Why pull me out of my classroom? Why fly across the country and drive another four hours on country roads to the middle of nowhere if we already know what happened?” Will could feel his fists clenching and unclenching but he couldn’t force himself to relax. This was absurd.

Jack didn’t react, continuing to look at Will impassively. Will started to step forward, but the grip of Hannibal’s hand around his bicep - far tighter than was necessary - stopped him. He glance at Hannibal who lifted his chin toward the trees to their right, where two figures in Evansville police uniforms were emerging from the foliage. There was no rational reason for concern, but Will felt another shudder run through him and Hannibal gripped him tighter.

“You didn’t eat the chocolate,” Jack said, sadly.

“We would have been so happy to have you,” came a voice from the trees.

“We need new minds,” came another.

“They makes us better, stronger,” came another voice, this time to their left.

“You have declined our invitation,” the voices, including Jack, spoke in perfect synchronization.

“It’s a hive mind,” Hannibal said, low in Will’s ear, before speaking loud enough for the others to hear. “We were unaware of your invitation. We meant no disrespect.”

The voices did not speak again. Instead there was a low, growling sound.

“Will,” Hannibal said urgently. “Run.”

Chapter End Notes

I've been a bit annoyed with my lack of time to write recently, but I'm hoping to have some more after work today. Maybe I can get another prompt down. I'm determined to finish these, lol, even though I should be working on my Reel Hannibal fic and my two WIPS. And I want to write a fic based on the twitter thread I wrote (like, the only one I've ever written).

Anyway . . . thanks to anyone who reads! Especially those of you who continue to do so as I play around with all these prompt ideas. :) I appreciate you all.

# The Fae

Abigail stared at herself in the mirror. The gown was gorgeous. Her hair was gorgeous. Her attendants had women it into several tiny braids that circled her head, intertwining them with periwinkle flowers and baby's breath. Her eyes were luminous, her cheeks rosy.

The only thing ruining the image was her frown. Or so she'd been told by the attendant - a kind, older woman with gentle brown eyes whose name she could never remember, though she was fairly certain it started with an "M" - who remained in the room and was standing behind her, fussing with the periwinkle blue ribbons being tied into Abigail's hair.

Tonight, she was being presented to the Seelie Court as the King's protégé.

Under normal circumstances this would make her heir to the throne, but in her case there was a major problem with that: she was human, not fae.

Sure, she'd been undergoing . . . changes. The longer she stayed in the kingdom the less human she felt, the slower her aging and the more in tune she felt with the forest. Even her physical attributes were beginning to change.

The differences were slight and almost unnoticeable. Her skin was already pale, but her freckles had slowly faded giving her face the ethereal, almost *unnatural* smoothness of the fae. Her skin glowed, lit from within. Her eyes were brighter. She'd grown an inch and a half despite already having been 19 when Hannibal brought her to court and, at least by human standards, done growing.

She wasn't even sure how old she was now. Time passed differently inside the boundaries of the kingdom. It might have been months, years or even centuries, though she doubted the last option.

She could ask the King and he would have to be honest with her. She'd considered it before, but it wasn't worth it. The fae were unable to outright lie, and occasionally chose to speak directly on a subject. But more often, they chose to speak in riddles. They also weren't all-knowing, so asking a question they weren't able to answer was an exercise in futility. All she would get would be a lot of flowery language about the unknowable concept of time.

She turned to check her profile in the mirror, her gown rustling gently as she moved. She tilted her chin up, portraying a haughtiness she didn't quite feel. Her eyes glowed. Her chin looked more angular, as though her face had elongated.

She looked fae. It was no wonder the King thought she was ready to be presented to the Court.

But there was one way to test it - one specific way to know the change was or was not complete.

"My name is Marissa," she said into the mirror, with absolute ease.

She could still lie.  She was still human.

She wasn't sure whether to be pleased or disappointed.

*

The presentation went as well as could be expected.  She curtseyed in the right places, said the right things, demurred to the King at the right times.  The fae folk surrounded her, pleased and elated at their King's protégé, even if she was of human origin.

"How lovely you look," they said.  "How perfectly you compliment King Hannibal."

The King embraced her, handing her a drink.  "Tonight is yours, feast and be merry," he said. The other members of the Court were well on their way to merriment, but she did not believe the King had indulged.

She'd been noticing lately that he would slip out once the reverie began in earnest and everyone was enjoying themselves too much to wonder about the whereabouts of their King.

She wanted to know where he went.

So she watched and she waited.

Despite being the reason for the ball, the drunker the fae folk got the easier it was to extract herself until she was standing on the edge of the crowd, watching the King at his throne.  She saw when he shimmered and disappeared.

*Of course he would use magic*.  But she'd been practicing.  Closing her eyes, she spoke the words in her mind.  Any of the other fae would have been difficult to follow, but the King left behind a specific trail.  It was easy.

Too easy.

She opened her eyes in the middle of a clearing in the forest with two sets of eyes blinking at her:  one the amused burgundy of her mentor and King, the other a confused blue-grey.  She stood, brushing the dirt from her skirt.

"Who is this, Hannibal?" Blue eyes asked.  Abigail's mouth dropped open.  Blue eyes was clearly human but *he knew Hannibal's name*.

"My surrogate daughter," Hannibal said, his eyes and face colored with amusement.  "There is a ball in her honor tonight."

"It appears she has tired of it," blue eyes said.  He extended a hand.  "I know the fae prefer not to give their names, but I have no such hesitation.  My name is Will."

Abigail shook his had but kept quiet.

"Who is this?"  she addressed her question to Hannibal.

Hannibal gave her a soft smile. "Your question has been answered by the man himself."

Abigail clinched her fists in irritation. "Who is he *to you*?" she spat.

"Are you jealous, dear?" the King asked. She stared at the two men in front of her; Blue Eyes - Will - was looking at the King in fond amusement and the King was looking at her with a similar but sharper emotion.

"No," Abigail said, feeling the lie more strongly than usual.

"Will is dear to me," the King answered: honest, straightforward, and frankly not very Kingly. At least not for a *fae* King. The two of them shared an expression and she took in their proximity and silent communication, noticing for the first time Hannibal's fingers resting gently on the other man's forearm.

"Oh," she said. "You're lovers."

Will flushed and Abigail considered that answer enough. Rumors in the Court had long described the faerie King Hannibal as a lover of humans. Hence his desire to take in Abigail as his own.

"I already told you he is dear to me," the King said. "Now, tell me why you followed me."

"I was curious," she said, bowing her head.

She heard a soft chuckle and looked up to see Will laughing. Hannibal was looking at the human in awe, a smile Abigail had rarely seen drawn wide across his face.

"Are you going to bring Will to Court as you did me?" Abigail asked. She watched Will's face as she asked the question, but instead of surprised he only appeared thoughtful.

"I have asked him to join us," the King said.

"Hannibal," Will said softly, his hand moving subtly to the King's waist.

"He has so far declined. But perhaps you can convince him," Hannibal said.

"Why don't you just take him?" Abigail asked. The King's smiled widened further, until it seemed it was about to escape his face.

"As I took you?" the King asked.

Abigail faltered. She'd heard about abductions from the mortal world: humans forced to remain inside the bounds of the Court against their will. But the King hadn't taken her. He'd given her a choice, and she accepted.

She watched as the King turned to Will, running long slender fingers through the young man's curls before wrapping them around the back of his head and pulling him close.

“Will must accept willingly as well,” he said. He was looking at Will, not Abigail, and his voice was deeper than she had ever heard it. “You will rule by my side,” he continued, speaking directly to Will, “and in a millennia when we are gone our daughter will succeed us.”

Will leaned his forehead against the King’s shoulder. Their closeness was chaste but incredibly intimate and Abigail looked away in embarrassment.

“Why do you decline, Will?” the King asked.

“You know,” Will responded and Abigail felt their eyes on her.

The King watched her for a moment, his smile entirely fae in that it was not entirely kind.

“What is your name?” he asked.

“I’ve been told not to give my name,” Abigail answered.

The King smiled more genuinely. “As your King I command it. Tell us your name."

Abigail felt the compulsion of the command. She couldn’t refuse to answer, but she could still lie as long as she retained a portion of her humanity.

“My name is -” she swallowed thickly, the words sticking in her throat. “My name is -” she was breathing heavily, her heart rate elevated. She tried - she really tried - to force out “Marissa” but she couldn’t. It was as though her throat closed. She felt tears gather in her eyes.

“I release you of the command, child,” the King said and Abigail nodded gratefully, closing her mouth and inhaling deeply through her nose. He crouched down before her, looking deeply into her eyes. “If I had taken you against your will you would not have changed, my darling,” he said. He turned to Will. “Your concerns are no longer valid. Will you join me?”

“He was concerned about me being human?” Abigail asked before Will could answer.

“He was concerned about me, darling,” the King responded, but Abigail knew that was a “yes.” And Will was right - the King bringing two humans into Court would draw the ire of the elder fae and call into question his fitness to rule. One human was acceptable. They would look away. One they could ignore initially, accepting them slowly as they changed. Embracing them once they were full fae . . .

Abigail could no longer lie.

Her humanity was gone.

“Go home, darling,” the King said. “Will and I must speak alone.”

Abigail nodded, closing her eyes and speaking the words under her breath. No one said a word about her reappearance in the ballroom, though several people raised their glasses as she moved toward the punch bowl. Behind her she felt a gentle shift in wind. She turned,

though no one else seemed to notice.  In front of the throne Will and Hannibal flickered into existence.  The King was wearing his traditional gold circlet, but on top of Will's head was a silver one, similar in look but with a rope of green ivy threaded through it.  They were embracing.  There were cheers from the Seelie Court, Abigail's among them, as Hannibal released his human and turned to address his people.  Will's eye's sought Abigail's in the crowd, smiling when he found her.

She thought she should be more aloof, now that she was fully fae, but found she couldn't help smiling in return.

# The Monster Extinct

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The back of his neck was already red in places his hair didn't cover, splashes of crimson on his pale skin. Sweat pooled between his shoulder blades and ran down his spine, settling in the small of his back and soaking into his shirt. His legs ached and his arms burned. He had been crouched in the same position for hours.

Will would become familiar these aches later, as awareness returned to his physical body. But in the moment - sun beating down on his back, his white linen shirt soaked through with sweat, his very bones protesting the punishment he was inflicting on his body - he noticed none of it. He was aware only of the swish of his brush slowly coaxing secrets from the earth.

Will had always appreciated the meticulousness of archeology. The gentle sweeping of a brush over artifacts, the painstaking removal of dirt millimeters at at time, the sifting of the earth for missed opportunities, the gentle revelation of life's mysteries buried beneath the soil.

The earth had many secrets buried within its depths. It was Will's all-consuming pleasure to reveal them, each new artifact found and information gleaned a moment of true elation and excitement.

Of course, not everyone appreciated a dig the way Will did. In fact, most people did not. Will didn't have time for those who didn't appreciate his passion, ergo Will didn't have time for most people.

That included their obstinate current benefactor who, despite having hired Will to direct the dig, seemed to believe he should have a significant amount of decision-making authority over its direction. Will had clashed with him several times already over where to dig next, which items were most important for retrieval, and the time it was taking to retrieve them.

He was used to a bit of push-back on the timeframe - there was always an impatience to find something, *anything* of special value, and the men who funded these digs seemed to universally be of the opinion that the faster Will worked the more likely he would find something significant.

To Will that was anything new that appeared over the course of the dig, no matter how small.

To his backers, that was anything they could sell or, depending on the benefactor, display as a means of dominating their rivals.

Will had never been good at placating those who funded the digs. Which was why he'd hired Chilton, irritating though the man was. He dressed beyond his station and spoke with an affectation of privilege that was far too flashy for Will's tastes. But Will had to begrudgingly

conceded the man had a way with the clientele, and he'd kept Will out of trouble on more than one occasion.

The current dig did not appear to be one of those occasions.

For some reason the man who'd hired them - a Count, as Will understood it - insisted on speaking directly with Will. Only that morning they'd been engaged in a heated argument about whether or not to move on to another mound on the property, Will flatly refusing to move on to anything else until he felt they'd exhausted the current location.

"If you believe you know better than the expert you hired then we can take our leave, sir," Will had threatened while Chilton bristled in the corner of the tent.

"Will." He'd literally been wringing his hands, something Will didn't think he'd ever seen in real life before, and looked exceptionally agitated even for him.

"Frederick." Will responded angrily, the use of the man's first name a subtle reminder that despite doing most of the talking - at least in any other circumstance - he worked for Will and not the other way around.

Count Lecter had smiled at the exchange. He'd smiled at Will, too, appearing to grow increasingly amused at each barb Will threw his way until Will wasn't certain how to handle the man anymore and had stormed angrily out of the tent.

Will scowled in irritation as a shadow fell across his work area. After that morning he hadn't expected the Count back for at least a day.

It had not yet been a full 5 hours.

He looked up to see the Count standing casually on the slope above him. The man stood at his full height; tall, muscular and physically intimidating without being terribly thick. He cut a dashing figure in his Panama suit and straw hat, hands relaxed in his pant pockets.

Will scowled. "Yes?"

The question was not friendly, but the Count smiled with what appeared to be genuine pleasure.

"How are things coming along, Mr. Graham?" the Count asked, moving carefully down the mound to stand in front of Will, stopping at the edge of the trench Will had been concentrating on. Thankfully. Though Will still found he was tempted to ask the man to back up.

But he wasn't technically hurting or impeding anything, so Will refrained. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Chilton approaching, likely attempting to head off another argument like the one they'd engaged in that morning. Will waved dismissively and then chuckled internally. He could *feel* Chilton's scowl even if he couldn't see it.

He walked around the trench to stand in front of Count Lecter. "Things, as you say, are the same as they were this morning, sir," Will said, irritated.

“That’s the issue, isn’t it, Mr. Graham?” the Count asked, smiling glibly. Will scowled more deeply, biting his tongue for fear of saying something irredeemable and settling for a hard glare.

“I respectfully request that you allow us to continue here a few days longer,” Will said, chewing on the words as he formed them. He forced his jaw to relax. “I’m working on bones now, and the skeleton appears to be unusual.”

At that, the Count’s entire demeanor changed. “Show me,” he said. Though it was clearly a command, genuine interest was also obvious in the Count’s sudden shift and despite himself Will felt a surge of eager pride.

“You can see from here,” he said, gesturing to the trench. The Count crouched then, taking in the bones Will had been working on before lowering himself to his hands and knees to get a closer look.

Will blinked in surprise. He couldn’t say he knew the Count well, but he gave the impression of a man of immaculate taste who took considerable pride in his appearance.

He was most certainly not a man who would kneel in the dirt in a white cotton suit.

“Tell me what I’m seeing,” the Count demanded.

Will shrugged, still looking at the other man’s knees in the dirt. It was unsettling but Will was surprisingly *pleased* at the sight.

“A skeleton, but the proportions are wrong. I’m working on the skull now, but there are anomalies in the skeletal structure and on the skull itself. Almost as if it had horns.” Will was tempted to laugh, but the Count looked at him with complete seriousness.

“Thank you for remaining adamant you continue digging here,” the Count said. Will looked down, unsure how to respond. “I believe this is what I was looking for.”

“Skeletal remains?”

“A specific type,” the Count clarified. Will wasn’t certain what that meant but the Count’s expression was entirely pleased.

“We’re not sure what it is yet,” Will cautioned.

“How quickly can you unearth it?”

“I won’t rush it,” Will crossed his arms, his irritation resurfacing. To his surprise, the Count merely chuckled. Will crouched in the dirt next to the other man before continuing. “At least a few days.”

“Take the time you need.” The Count brushed his hands together to rid them of dirt before giving up and brushing them casually across the thighs of a suit that likely cost more than Will made in a year. The action struck Will as odd. He might have expected it from someone else with a title or wealth - there were people of lesser means who would purposefully ruin

such expensive clothing simply because they *could* - but Count Lecter had always seemed so *careful* with anything he touched.

He didn't seem the type to casually ruin a pair of pants, so either he had decided kneeling in the dirt had done the job and a little more dirt wouldn't hurt or he was so distracted he'd barely registered the action.

"You've ruined your pants." The words were out before Will had actively decided to speak. The Count stood then, brushing uncaringly at the dirt on his knees as he did so. He hummed.

"A worthy sacrifice. Though they may yet be salvaged - my housekeeper is quite skilled." He considered Will for a moment. "You have dirt on your face, but I daresay it makes you more handsome." Will stared, attempting to wrap his mind around the other man's words and failing.

"Still -" The Count pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped it across Will's forehead. He squinted and placed his fingertips lightly on Will's cheek, rubbing his thumb over the skin above Will's eyebrow, pressing gently to remove the particles of earth clinging stubbornly to skin.

Will cleared his throat before turning his attention away from the confusion he felt at the Count's words and touch and back to something he understood.

"What is it you expect from these remains?" he asked, his voice huskier than usual. Though he was no longer looking at the Count he could feel the other man watching him for several long moments before he, too, turned his attention to the partially excavated earth in front of them.

"A long-extinct monster," the Count said. Will chanced a quick glance and the Count gave him an amused smile. "A legend from my childhood."

"Monsters aren't real, Count Lecter," Will scoffed.

"No," the Count conceded quickly. "But legends have some truth to them. I believe this was a creature that once existed."

"Don't be foolish enough to believe this is that creature," Will said. Chilton would have panicked at his brazenness, but Will didn't want the dig's benefactor to get his hopes up only to have them dashed when his expectations were not met.

That could be bad for the dig, after all.

But the Count merely smiled again. "A bit of foolishness is not always a bad thing, Mr. Graham." He turned to look at Will, an earnest expression on his face. "I also quite foolishly hope that you'll join me for dinner tomorrow night." He paused. "We could talk about your progress," he added almost as an afterthought - perhaps to provide Will with an excuse to accept the invitation without overthinking.

Will dipped his head quickly, the barest indication of a nod. He wasn't sure why he agreed, clenching his jaw and biting his cheek. But it would be an opportunity to speak more freely with the Count. Perhaps he could, in fact, get the Count to understand the order in which he wish to pursue the project and why.

"I look forward to it," the Count said softly. He spoke more loudly as he turned to take his leave. "I leave this in your quite capable hands, Mr. Graham."

A movement in the corner of his eye caused Will to look across the site. Chilton was standing, watching him. The other man had stopped when Will waived him away but hadn't actually *left*, instead remaining in place to watch the interaction between Will and the Count.

Will supposed Chilton felt it was his duty to ensure that Will didn't do any damage to the relationship, but he still felt a surge of anger at having been spied on. Chilton was too far away to have heard much, if any, of the conversation, but he was looking at Will rather curiously nonetheless.

"Get back to work," Will yelled at him across the site, before picking up his brush and making his way carefully back down into the trench.

Chapter End Notes

So, this series of prompts is apparently just me coming up with lots ideas for potentially much longer pieces . . .

# Cultural Differences

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will watched as Hannibal unwrapped the recently procured liver. It wasn't their dinner party, though he was sure they would end up hosting one sooner rather than later. They'd been told not to bring anything, but Hannibal couldn't pass up the chance to show off his culinary skills and had insisted on bring his homemade liver pate. Will smiled, sensing the other man's anticipation and allowing it to mingle with his own. It was a heady feeling, knowing what they would be serving their neighbors.

It had been only their second hunt since moving to Kozani. They'd agreed that moving to a small town required them to be patient and cautious, so both times they'd ventured some distance from the town: once to the north, once to the west.

Both had been Will's picks. The characters of their prey were not as unsavory as Will might once have desired. He wondered briefly how closely he was coming to resemble Hannibal in that respect, finding the idea didn't bother him as much as it might have once.

As much as he once thought it should.

*Killing changes the way you think.*

"You know, the word *vrykolakas* is believed to have been derived from the Slavic word *vărkolak,*" Hannibal said, pulling Will from his thoughts. He was browning butter on the stovetop, preparing to sauté the liver.

"Oh?" Will finished peeling his shallot and began dicing it, noting the way Hannibal's eyes lingered on his hands. He focused on the knife and cutting board, smiling to himself, as he made quick work of first one shallot and then a second. He composed his face and reached for the garlic, meeting Hannibal's eyes as he did.

"See something you like, Dr Lecter?" Hannibal smiled at the teasing tone of his voice but said nothing. Will flexed his fingers, smiling openly as the Hannibal tracked the movement.

Hannibal swallowed and Will watched the motion of his throat, imagining the fingers of one hand curling around it while the others curved inside him and knowing Hannibal was imagining the same.

Will removed two cloves of garlic and focused on mincing them. "You were saying about the *vrykolakas*?" he asked, forming the unfamiliar word slowly.

"Yes," Hannibal blinked, adding Will's shallots and garlic to the pan, allowing them to soften just slightly before adding the liver. "There's a similar word in Lithuanian: *vilkolakis."*

“What does it mean?” Will asked. Hannibal occasionally spoke Lithuanian, but had brushed off Will’s request to learn the language saying it was unnecessary.

“Werewolf.”

Will raised his eyebrows. “What prompted this, exactly?”

Hannibal chuckled warmly. “The word v*rykolakas* is more frequently translated to vampire. The two concepts are often combined in older folklore.”

That didn’t answer the question, but Will resisted the urge to point that out. Barely. He focused on the movement of Hannibal’s forearm as he tended to the liver, adding capers and thyme and turning the heat down slightly.

“I suppose there’s a similarity in that they are both considered a monstrous change to a human,” Will said. “Maybe the meaning of the word changed?”

“Language is constantly evolving,” Hannibal agreed. He pulled the pan from the heat, adding a small amount of brandy before returning it to the burner.

“It does seem odd to equate Dracula and the Wolf-man.”

“Strictly speaking, the v*rykolakas* is more similar to a modern day zombie.”

Will laughed. “The word for ‘vampire’ doesn’t even mean vampire?”

“Cultural differences,” Hannibal shrugged. “Until Stoker wrote Dracula vampires were considered to be beastly in appearance, or sometimes merely a bloated version of their former selves. Either way, they were not the debonair Count Dracula. Vampire lore was irrevocably changed.”

“Well, it’s hard not to have a thing for a debonair Count.” Will smirked. The look Hannibal gave him was probably the closest the other man would ever get to rolling his eyes. “Ok, I’m curious,” Will continued. “I assume they eat brains rather than drink blood?”

“Flesh, yes,” Hannibal said. “Livers, in particular.”

“An organ that filters blood. I suppose there’s a connection there.”

“Perhaps.” Hannibal turned off the burner, watching as the brandy continued to boil in the pan. “You’d be surprised how many people in small towns like this one still believe the lore. There is a superstition that you should not answer the door until at least the second knock.”

“Vampires only knock once?”

They were quiet as Hannibal moved the contents of the pan to the food processor, pureeing them into a looser than expected - at least on Will’s part - mixture. He placed the mixture in the refrigerator to chill and firm.

“There was an article in the paper,” Hannibal said, “about a man the town over missing his liver. Locals were concerned about v*rykolakas.”*

*“*Do *we* need to be concerned?” Will asked softly, moving to help Hannibal clean up. Stepping behind him at the sink, Hannibal wound strong arms around his waist, encasing him. He was shorter and slimmer but not significantly, though physically Hannibal always managed to make him feel small. It had bothered him initially, but he’d come to enjoy it and he shrank into the warmth of the body pressed to his back.

“No,” Hannibal said. “But when we arrive for the dinner party tonight, knock twice.”

Chapter End Notes

The Vrykolakas is the ancient Greek version of a vampire and the information in this prompt is true to the mythology. The probable origin of the word I got from Wikipedia - I thought it was interesting the Wikipedia article specifically referenced a Lithuanian word and couldn't resist using that.

An interesting fact about the vampires is that if you were human before you changed you would appear bloated, but if you were a werewolf before the change you would appear exactly the way you always had. Apparently in small towns a lot of people do still believe in them to some extent.

If you're at all curious here is a website with some more information

Only two prompts left! I'm hoping I have time to do another one tonight after work.

# The Minotaur

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was dark - but it was always dark.

Hannibal was hungry - but he was always hungry.

He wandered through the halls of the labyrinth, fingers trailing along the walls, feeling each groove and divot. To most people the labyrinth was steady and unchanging, its rock walls a testament against time.

Not to Hannibal. He could feel the changes as they occurred beneath his fingertips; the subtlest indications of time passing.

It was the only way he had to mark the days.

The labyrinth was meant to be his cage, to house him until he eventually died.

What a foolish notion. The labyrinth was but a maze - a difficult one, to be sure, but solvable - and Hannibal knew every corner of it like he knew his own skin.

There was no point in leaving. The labyrinth was home and he was its beating heart.

Every nine years he was fed: the sacrifices easy prey, screaming and crying in the darkness of the maze.

In between feedings the heroes would appear. They were amusing diversions, making their way through the maze as Hannibal waited patiently at its center. He would have his sword at the ready when they appeared. Perhaps they thought they would have the upper hand because of his hunger, or that his body would be weakened from years spent in a cage.

But he was free to roam, and while the hunger was constant he had trained his body to function though it. There was nothing like a good fight to bring the endless hunger to the forefront of his mind, and nothing so sating as devouring the flesh of his enemy.

Once the flesh was gone and the bones discarded there would once again be silence, and Hannibal was forced to admit that not only was existence lonely, but that he would always be alone. He began to wonder if he shouldn't let the next hero best him, but he knew he would not.

He had his pride, even if he was the only one who knew it.

*

The sense of day and night underground is more instinctual than due to any external indicators. Hannibal slept and woke on a relatively unchanged schedule. This particular

morning, however, he had been roused early. There was something strange in the labyrinth, a kind of humming.

Hannibal smiled in the dark. It had to be a hero. A flush of pleased anticipation ran through him and he considered getting up, but instead he feigned sleep.

Sooner than he expected he heard footsteps outside his lair.

He was impressed - it took most heroes at least twice the time to reach him. This one must be particularly intelligent. Hannibal sat up, taking in the form in the doorway. It would be harder for the hero to see him, still getting used to the low light whereas Hannibal's eyes had long since adapted to the dark of the caves.

The hero was slight but muscular, with unruly dark hair that fell pleasingly around his face. His face was also pleasant; a defined cut of the jaw, soft-looking lips, a fine dusting of hair across his chin and cheeks, a gentle curve of the nose. His eyes appeared dark, but it was difficult to tell without light. His form gave the impression of someone very young, his bearing that of someone older and more experienced.

*How intriguing*, Hannibal thought, watching. In his right hand the hero held his sword, in his left a ball of golden yarn.

Hannibal nearly laughed. No wonder he'd made it to the center so quickly.

"Hero," he growled, the harsh sound of his own voice surprising after years of disuse. The hero set the ball of yarn on the ground in the doorway before approaching. He moved languidly, seemingly unconcerned that he was approaching a monster he was soon to be fighting. He was wearing minimal armor. Quite the smug hero. Hannibal smiled, baring his teeth.

The golden ball of yarn cast a low light in the cave so that it was brighter than usual, if still dark. He was certain the hero saw him - certain he appeared threatening - but the man continued to approach. He looked . . . confused. His brow furrowed and the arm holding his sword lowered.

Hannibal had been prepared for a fight, his muscles tensed and his nerves alight with promise. He frown at the hero, wondering if he should make the first strike.

"You're a man," the hero said.

Hannibal stepped back involuntarily. He most certainly was *not* a man. He'd been imprisoned in the labyrinth due to his monstrous appetite and appearance. He lifted his sword, ready to fight, but the hero only frowned and lowered his.

He did not relinquish it, however. He was not entirely foolish, this hero, and clearly still at the ready; prepared to defend himself. But no strike would be forthcoming.

"Did you not come to fight me, hero?" Hannibal goaded.

"Will," the hero responded. "And yes."

“Then raise your sword.”

Will did not, instead watching Hannibal was a cautious curiosity. “I was told you had the head of a bull,” he said, “but perhaps that only meant that you are bull-headed.”

Hannibal growled, the sound becoming frustrated when Will held his ground.

“I have been told many names for you, Minotaur. *Θevrumineś, Asterion*, I wonder - what do you call yourself?”

“Hannibal.”

Will raised his sword. “Pleasure to meet you, Hannibal.” He thrust, a move Hannibal parried easily, as the hero had clearly known he would. Grinning, Hannibal moved forward with his own thrust, moving quickly to knock the hero off-balance. But Will was lithe and he moved easily to avoid the blow, laughing happily as their swords clashed once more.

“You are quite the fighter,” Hannibal said, breathless, the clanging of the weapons echoing throughout the halls of the maze. He felt them in his bones, the vibration of their clashing swords slowly becoming a part of him, as the labyrinth itself had. He felt the humming of the magic thread throughout the caverns, his own harsh breathing, adrenaline and excitement as well as Will’s enjoyment at the clash of swords, his respect for Hannibal and . . . something Hannibal had not felt before. An entirely different type of hunger.

He faltered, the swing of his sword not connecting and allowing Will the upper hand. The hero pressed the sharp side of his weapon against Hannibal’s neck.

“I suppose I have won,” he said, breathless from exertion. Hannibal felt the hero’s chest heaving against his. He looked at Will without fear, expecting to see triumph in his eyes. But there was something else, something Hannibal didn’t quite understand. He leaned forward, feeling the cut of the sword against his neck, as if by getting closer he could force the unknowable to become knowable.

Will closed his eyes and exhaled harshly; hot, moist breath hitting Hannibal’s chin.

Hannibal didn’t understand humans. He was not a part of their world and had not been for several decades. He didn’t know their wants or desires. He didn’t know Will. He didn’t understand the expression on the hero’s face or in his eyes.

Will’s sword slid across his neck, stinging as it cut his flesh cleanly and easily. But the hero hadn’t applied any more pressure; hadn’t cut into Hannibal in any meaningful way. Will had taken his blood in victory but not his life.

“They expect me to kill you,” the hero said. “But they also expect you to be a monster.”

“I am a monster.”

Will turned his head, his eyes roaming over the bones strewn across the room. “Not the monster they are expecting.” The hero’s free hand came to rest on Hannibal’s cheek, tracing the bones beneath, across his snout and down to his chin. He growled, catching Will’s wrist

in his hand. It was slender and he felt the frail bones beneath the skin. Were he to squeeze he could break them.

He didn't want to.

He closed his eyes, releasing Will's wrist and placing the hero's hand back on his cheek. He felt the echo of his mother in the lightness of the touch. She had caressed him when he was small. She had loved him despite his monstrous form. She had loved him as his appetite developed.

He remembered her tears as he was locked away.

They'd already been close but Hannibal felt movement, sensing the shift when Will came closer still. He felt the soft press of lips against his own and made a surprised noise, his eyes fluttering open. Will stepped backward, putting space between them nervously. Hannibal watched him for a moment.

Will seemed as surprised about what had happened as Hannibal himself.

"I found you wandering the halls of the labyrinth. You were lost. You don't know how long you've been here."

Hannibal didn't move, looking at the hero in confusion. Will smiled, gentle and slightly sad. "The Minotaur is dead, Hannibal. I was victorious. We are leaving."

"You are luring me to my death. They will kill me as soon as I exit the labyrinth." Even as he said it Hannibal knew he was going to leave. He was tired of the cage, of being alone with only his thoughts and breath for company. He would not have a better option. And . . . he wanted to leave with this man. "They will see my face," he said, "and they will kill me."

Will shook his head. He moved toward the doorway of the lair, Hannibal following but staying far enough behind that he could avoid a sudden swing of the sword. They stepped into the soft light of the golden yarn and Will lifted his sword.

"Look," he said, gesturing at the blade.

"It is a fine blade, Hero," Hannibal said. "But surely you know that already. You bested me with it."

With a soft huff of breath Will adjusted the way he was holding the sword. "No," he said. "Look at the reflection. Look at yourself."

Hannibal looked. His face was not the same as Will's. His cheeks were sharper and his lips were wider. His nose was a different shape. His hair was lighter.

But despite this slight differences it was clear that he looked like Will. He brought a hand to his face, tracing the bones in his cheek as Will had earlier, remembering the path of the hero's fingers. Remembering the press of his lips. He looked at Will, uncertain how to react.

“Kings don’t like illegitimate children, Hannibal.” Will said softly. “And they have made you a monster. But you don’t deserve death at my hand.” He lowered his sword. “Besides, I would be a fool to give you up as a sparring partner.”

“You hardly know me.” It was a token protest. Will shrugged.

“You learn a lot about a man in a fight.” For a moment they stood quietly, each taking the measure of the other. “Shall we?” Will’s voice was soft.

He didn’t wait for a response, instead turning and following the yarn out of the labyrinth, curling it back into the ball as they moved forward and up, up, up - closer and closer to the surface of the earth.

Closer than Hannibal had been in years.

Closer than he’d cared to be.

He concentrated on the man in front of him: the long, sure stride of his legs, the slight shifting of his hips, the muscles he could see moving in his back and arms as he curled the line of yarn back into the ball.

Hannibal felt as though the walls were contracting around him. Cold, shadowy hands reached from the stone to grab him and pull him back - back into the depths of the earth, back into the lair at the center of the labyrinth. It wouldn’t survive without him. Once he left it would crumble, erasing not only his existence but his own. It *needed* him.

They were nearing the exit when Will paused. It was lighter near the surface and Hannibal looked over the hero once more. He was dusty and still carried a light sheen of sweat from their exertions. His skin was pale. His hair still appeared dark, but his eyes were lighter than Hannibal had thought. Grey, maybe.

Will was looking at sharply, assessing something. “I should have -” he started, trailing off and looking down the hall. “Ah.” He moved quickly down one of the side passages, pulling a tunic from a skeleton. Not, Hannibal noted, one of his victims. It must have been someone who wandered into the labyrinth and thought himself stuck, never realizing how close he was to the surface. He handed to Hannibal. “Put it on.”

Hannibal removed his own covering - which was much thinner that the one he was putting on - noting the way Will’s eyes trailed over and then carefully away from his chest. Will bent to pick up the garment Hannibal had discarded, tearing it into pieces with several quick movements. He moved close, rocking up onto his toes, and wound two pieces around Hannibal’s neck, covering the wound there.

The hero’s breath was warm on his skin and Hannibal found himself once again thinking about the soft press of lips to his own. Will licked his lips and Hannibal followed the motion of his tongue, feeling warm. The hero looked up, meeting Hannibal’s eyes with a smile and a soft exhale.

“Ready to go?” Will asked, voice quiet but gaze intense. Hannibal nodded, swallowing thickly. He felt Will’s hand rest lightly on his forearm and then squeeze.

Hannibal squinted as they moved toward the entrance. It was bright - so bright - and Will grabbed his arm, pulling his forward. Hannibal closed his eyes, allowing himself to be led, the light growing brighter behind his eyelids as he did.

It was warm.

He turned his face up to the heat of the sun, something he had not felt in years. He heard the noise of people, felt the tightening grip of Will’s hand on his arm.

“The Minotaur is dead,” Will announced. Hannibal kept his eyes closed against the light, but he felt the movement of Will unsheathing his sword and holding it up.

There was blood on it, Hannibal realized. *His* blood. Proof of the Minotaur’s death.

He opened his eyes to a slit. Will was still speaking, but he focused on the cadence of the hero’s voice instead of his words, allowing his eyes to slowly adjust to the light. Will was still gripping his arm and he was grateful for the connection. As his eyes slowly opened he turned to look at Will, who looked at him in turn. The people he had been speaking to were dispersing, Will waving away the few who remained.

“Oh,” Hannibal said.

Will raised an eyebrow.

“Your eyes are as blue as the sky,” Hannibal said, awestruck. Will laughed.

“Welcome back to the surface, Hannibal,” he said, his smile more warming than the sun.

Chapter End Notes

So much for having this up last night . . . thought I did write a fair amount of it yesterday.

I've been considering venturing into some HEU stuff and I nearly made Adam the Minotaur in this prompt simply because Asterion means "star".

Obviously I messed around with the myth a bit. I was worried that the concept of the meeting was similar to the Dragon prompt I wrote . . . but not the other hand heroes being sent to kill monsters is rather a common trope.

# Happily Ever After

Chapter Notes

I decided to bookend this with something not quite the same but a little more similar to what I did in Chapter 1, where it's a bit freeform and not really the traditional structure of a fic.

I'm putting notes in front because I understand if that's not your cup of tea and you were looking for a real fic (though it's also pretty short lol).

There are several ideas in here I really want to come back to, time allowing. I wouldn't mind some input though - if there's one in particular you really liked over the others, please comment and let me know!

What is the measure of happiness?

An ear to the steady beat of a heart, the taste of salt on skin, the mingling of blood and breath and flesh, the peace that comes in shared moments of solitude.

Smiles on waking, days spent languishing in bed, moments of violence and ecstasy.

The past is a creeping beast, silent despite its heavy, clawed feet. It worms its way into rooms, steals the air from conversations, poisons words with anger. Once there it is not easily silenced or banished.

There is behind the contentment always a tinge of regret.

“Happily Ever After” is an ending for a fairy tale that fails to address the difficulties or consequences of real life. He’d wanted it: white picket fence, family, normality.

In the end what he got was something better.

Life now is the sum of contradictory feelings, all fighting for dominance. Slowly he’s begun to realize it doesn’t matter what feeling wins on any particular day or time. The same thing awaits him at the end of the day: a warm bed, a solid chest, a touch that is softer and gentler and kinder than it has any right to be, but rough and firm still when it needs to be. Skin, bone, and muscle capable of great violence and great pleasure.

All he feels at the end of the day is acceptance.

Maybe that is his Happily Ever After.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!